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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on the role Southern philanthropy can play in addressing racism, poverty, and inequality by supporting education and workforce improvement. "Framing the Conversation" takes input from George Autry (MDC), William Bynum (Enterprise Corporation of the Delta), Lynn Walker Huntley (Southern Education Foundation), and Martin Lehfeldt (Southeastern Council of Foundations) on the philanthropic agenda to address these issues. A section on philanthropy documents: (1) efforts of the Lyndhurst Foundation to engage more fully in public life by supporting quality public education, decent and affordable housing, and community revitalization efforts in Chattanooga, Tennessee; (2) reflections of duPont Fund Executive Director Sherry Magill on lessons learned in Jacksonville, Florida, about creating "safe space" for difficult conversations, the role of racist history, engaging the corporate community, access to power, and public education; and (3) lessons learned during the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation's efforts to move from project-based grantmaking to comprehensive capacity building. A section on education includes: (1) BellSouth Foundation's evaluation process preceding a 5-year grantmaking program targeting teacher education and educational reform; (2) the Rural Community College Initiative to provide rural access to educational opportunity; and (3) an essay by Dr. Norman Francis on the legacy of historically black colleges and universities. A section on workforce development describes the New Orleans Jobs Initiative; Dr. Robert M. Franklin's views on the role of religious institutions in promoting workforce development; and the Foundation of the Mid South efforts to develop opportunities for progressive change in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi in the areas of economic development, education, and families and children. (SAS)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

# Investing In Our Future: A Southern Perspective

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# Introduction

Moved by reading John Egerton's *Speak Now Against the Day*, Jessie Ball duPont Fund trustee George Bedell had an outrageous idea: could a group of Southern foundations spearhead an honest, regional conversation about the South – about our history, our present predicament, and our future? Could we dare to move from talk to action, drafting an agenda for change for the next generation?

From that reading to this writing, some 24 months have passed. In October 1997, the Center for the Study of the American South – with support from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund – hosted an organizational meeting of a small group of black and white Southerners determined to make common cause around the region's enduring challenges. Calling their work "Unfinished Business: Overcoming Racism, Poverty, and Inequality," these people set out to encourage others to participate in the conversation. Hundreds of people residing in 23 different Southern communities have joined in this effort to adopt a public agenda for change. Citizens from throughout the region will come together this November in Birmingham to share their ideas and identify common ground for our collective future.

Racism, as Gunnar Myrdal instructed us, is an *American* dilemma, not a Southern one. But like it or not, the South's history with slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow legislation, and the Civil Rights movement requires of its leadership and of its people – black and white – an honest conversation about what exactly happened here. And in recognizing that our region will become increasingly diverse over the next twenty years, we must find a way to include newer Southerners of different ethnic backgrounds in our conversations.

> **"...if the South is going to adopt a progressive agenda for the next generation, the vision and energy will come from philanthropy, grassroots leaders, and community-based organizations..."**

Inspired in part by South Africa's example with reconciliation, by racial divisions evidenced in the aftermath of the O.J. Simpson verdict, and by backlash to affirmative action policies, a loose-knit group of black and white Southerners have led the "Unfinished Business" conversations. They represent educational foundations, private philanthropies, community foundations, think tanks, academic institutions, and just plain folks. They are not a monolithic group

in terms of abiding by any political or economic ideology. But they are bound together, in great measure, by having grown up and come of age in a South legally divided by race, and by a deep belief that neither the South nor the nation can prosper if the country is balkanized along racial lines.

They also understand that the South and the nation have made great strides in overcoming racism since the height of Jim Crow days, and that much of what now divides the South and the nation is better understood in terms of economic class. Unequal access to capital, to decision makers, and to power further complicates our ability to fulfill the promises of American democracy.

This issue of *Notes from the Field* was inspired by the "Unfinished Business" conversations. Indeed, it is a companion piece.

In their publication *The State of the South 1998*, Chapel Hill-based MDC, Inc., argues that a prosperous Southern future is absolutely dependent upon:

- increasing and focusing philanthropic activity;
- better educating the region's citizenry; and
- improving the skills of the workforce.

The connection between the three is inextricable. Thus, we have divided this issue of *Notes* into three sections: philanthropy, education, and workforce development – with special focus on the role Southern philanthropy can play in addressing the barriers of racism, poverty, and inequality.

The ideas and leadership offered here suggest a common understanding of the challenges our region faces and a creativity in searching for solutions to tough, enduring dilemmas. We have in common a belief in things public, an understanding that our region will never be better than our public school system, a deep commitment to investing in people and in developing local assets, and – as John Egerton contends – the conviction that most folks have had enough of conflict and division and are hungry for some answers that will allow us to attain unity, equality, and prosperity. George Autry is fond of saying that if the South is going to adopt a progressive agenda for the next generation, the vision and energy will come from philanthropy, grassroots leaders, and community-based organizations, as well as an enlightened press and private sector. The stories contained in *Notes* lend legitimacy to his argument.

I'd like to thank the many people who agreed to be interviewed or write sections for *Notes from the Field*. The ideas found in these pages belong to the authors, whose citations we have included inside. Finally, this publication owes a debt of gratitude to Mark and Tracy Constantine, who challenged the Jessie Ball duPont Fund to consider publishing an issue of *Notes from the Field* that would include some of the best work supported by Southern philanthropy, and not only the work supported by the Fund. Together, they executed this document.

Sherry P. Magill

Sherry P. Magill
Executive Director
Jessie Ball duPont Fund

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**Framing the Conversation** — As federal funding for public programs declines and public confidence in political leadership wanes, many people are looking to the philanthropic sector to address the issues and policies which compromise the vitality and health of Southern communities – issues such as racism, poverty, and inequality.

We invited four leaders of the philanthropic and nonprofit communities to consider the question: What philanthropic agenda would you prescribe to address these pressing issues over the next decade?

We wish to thank George Autry, William Bynum, Lynn Walker Huntley, and Martin Lehfeldt for their thoughtful participation.

## George Autry

It was some time ago when Dr. Johnson added these words to Oliver Goldsmith's *The Traveler*: "How small, of all that human hearts endure, that part which laws or kings can cause or cure."

Today he could add "or legislatures, presidents, and governors" because today's political leadership is driven more by focus groups, polls, and the ephemeral issue of the hour than by a long-term commitment to develop the economy and the capacity of people to participate in that economy. It is, therefore, the job of the region's civic leadership to set the public agenda and keep policymakers focused on that agenda. That leadership includes the profit and not-for-profit sectors, the press, and universities. And that leadership, to be effective, needs research, information, and inspiration.

What should philanthropy's agenda be, given today's challenges and shifts in our demography and economy, as well as our expectations of government? Think more about the shifting plates beneath the public and nonprofit sectors:

We are at a point in history when the federal government has withdrawn from funding applied research and demonstrations in education, economic development, and housing, just as it has reduced the funding for programs in these areas. Foundations can't fill the void in the latter, but they might in the former. In fact, consciously and unconsciously, foundations are already becoming the venture capital and nonprofits the testing ground for economic and social innovation. They are society's R&D sector. But they must not only be the generator of new models; they must also be the spark for enlightened leaders who can implement those models.

In addition, foundations have the potential to be brokers, convenors, and promoters of dialogue on poverty and race at the point in history when the old black/white, mostly native-born and Protestant region is being shaken up by new streams of migrants, skilled and unskilled, from Asia, Mexico, Eastern Europe, and the Caribbean.

Thus, the problem is not so much the old one – racism. Southern white folks have come a long way from the belief that those of other races are inherently inferior and should therefore be accorded fewer legal and social rights and privileges. But our society is increasingly fractured and fragmented into enclaves, huddling together, harboring suspicion, bias, and stereotypical notions each of the other. While those attitudes are not the exclusive province of one group and are offensive in all, they are dangerous in the group that holds the economic power. Rodney King asked, "Why can't we all just get along?" Prejudice, poverty, and lack of leadership are part of the answer.

So what's a good old Southern foundation to do? Well, American philanthropy has eliminated pellagra, designed new economic indicators, built our libraries, and helped preserve our cultural resources. Southern philanthropy should now use more of its assets and moral suasion to focus on the twin legacies of the old South, poverty and prejudice.

That's an interesting combination for Southern philanthropy, which has invested heavily in building a higher education infrastructure that's better than any in the industrialized world outside America. It's an infrastructure, however, with an underdeveloped potential. Even though the South has invested in the creation and accumulation of knowledge, the application of knowledge has now become the greater challenge. Can philanthropy help us find the incentives to leverage the wisdom from academia to the solution of today's problems?

Across town from MDC, there is – for instance – a new Center for the Study of the American South. Anchored at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, it intends to forge links with other Southern research universities.

As the Center grows, I believe it can become an agent for improving as well as studying the region. It can become a cauldron for increasing the numbers and knowledge of Southern leaders and identifying new sources of civic leadership, whether in the board room or housing project, the rural college or village church. It can show that the university is not only the training ground for young leaders, but also the nurturing ground for older ones.

With help from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and the Kenan Trusts, the Center has already begun playing that role as the convenor of the first "Unfinished Business" gathering. It could follow by linking the conference participants and others into an informal permanent network of individuals committed to the "Business."

As was the case with "Unfinished Business," philanthropy and universities need to see each other more often as partners than benefactors and supplicants. Together, they can fortify leaders with the fruits of scholarship. Of course, that fruit must be peeled in such a way as to make it edible.

Larger foundations and research universities can sponsor programs through such intermediaries as the Center to disseminate digestible and understandable information across state lines on trends, barriers, opportunities, and best practices.

Family and community foundations and regional universities can support innovation and tailor it to local communities.

As society's economic and social R&D arm, it is critical that philanthropy leverage the region's intellectual resources to spur new strategies for overcoming enduring problems like poverty and racial division. Even more important are philanthropic and academic partnerships to increase the quality and quantity of leaders who can implement those strategies with integrity.

***George B. Autry** is founding president of MDC, Inc., a private, nonprofit corporation specializing since 1967 in economic and workforce development policy in the South. MDC analyzes economic trends, identifies barriers and opportunities, and then works with business, government, and philanthropy to design policies and programs that increase economic activity and opportunity.*

## William Bynum

Due in large measure to the pioneering works of sociologists Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, a fresh perspective on the questions of racial inequality, poverty, and economic opportunity has emerged. This perspective underscores the importance of assets – the ownership of tangible and financial property such as homes, businesses, land, retirement accounts, stocks and bonds, and saving accounts – in developing social policy to address the racial divide in America.

Using assets as the starting point for analysis, I offer three simple, but profound, propositions that philanthropists might consider when developing grantmaking strategies to address issues of racism, poverty, and inequality in the South. First, I argue that inequality in asset holdings has had – and continues to have – a profound impact on the quality of life experienced by blacks and whites in America. Second, I assert that inequality in asset holdings is inextricably linked to racism. Finally, I contend that a focus on assets reveals new opportunities for philanthropic institutions to address racism, poverty, and inequality and to improve the economic status of low-income Americans.

**Research shows that differences in asset holdings matter immensely.** When people control assets, they have a sense of ownership, power, and hope for the future that profoundly affects the way they conduct their lives. The work of Michael Sherraden and Deborah Page-Adams suggests, for example, that the presence of assets in a family leads to improved educational performance, reduced teen delinquency, reduced teen pregnancy, and improved economic outcomes as adults.

**Indeed, racism in America cannot be understood without reference to assets.** Beginning with enslavement, black Americans have been denied assets systematically. After the Civil War, they were denied property when the promise of "Forty Acres and a Mule" went unfulfilled just as white Americans were given 160 acres of land under the Homestead Act. In the 19th Century, "Black Code" regulations,

intimidation, and lynchings severely restricted the efforts of blacks to own and operate businesses that would have competed with those owned by whites. In the 20th century, despite the passage of powerful laws including the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974, the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act of 1975, and the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977, there is ample evidence that racial discrimination in mortgage lending continues.

> **"Indeed, racism in America cannot be understood without reference to assets."**

The effects of this racial discrimination are evidenced by the startling difference in asset holdings of black and white Americans. According to Oliver and Shapiro, the median net worth of whites is $43,800; the median net worth of blacks is $3,700. The median net financial assets for whites is $6,999; for blacks the figure drops to $0. Controlling for differences in education, occupation, and demographics, Oliver and Shapiro determined that race alone accounts for 71 percent of the differential in net worth and 76 percent of the differential in net financial assets. Stated another way, the cost of being born black in America is $43,143 in mean net worth and $25,794 in mean net financial assets.

**Ultimately, if racial discrimination in America is fundamentally about assets and property, then philanthropic strategies to address racism, poverty, and inequality must likewise be about assets and property.** I offer the following three recommendations to the philanthropic community in their efforts to support asset accumulation among low-wealth individuals and families.

1. **Foundations, through grants or program-related investments, can provide much needed capital and operating support for community development financial institutions.** CDFIs – including revolving loan funds, development banks, and community development credit unions – play a central role in closing the capital gap between the haves and have nots by supporting entrepreneurship and housing and business development in black communities, providing education and information on the subject of financial planning, and facilitating networks to develop capital and economic opportunities. Philanthropic investments provide the critical subsidy necessary for undertaking the labor-intensive, high transaction activities that are required to drive development in economically depressed regions and communities.

2. **Philanthropic investments can support the creation of individual and family asset accounts.** Sherraden proposes, and Oliver and Shapiro endorse, the creation of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) to enable disadvantaged Americans to accumulate productive assets such as a first home, a higher education, a small business, or a retirement account. Education IDAs – or Children's Savings Accounts – can also be established to benefit current and future generations of black children in

America. These accounts, initiated at birth for all children, offer strong incentives (such as high matching deposits) for asset-poor Americans to participate. Foundations can play a critical role by sponsoring demonstration projects in communities throughout the South to learn more about the efficacy of and barriers to IDA creation. Ideally, foundations would support long-term evaluation of these demonstration projects – findings which can inform future public policy debates.

3. **Foundations can support the operations of nonprofits working to modify tax policies that favor those with assets over the asset-poor.** A host of government programs and policies have historically assisted the white middle class to acquire, secure, and expand assets. Among the best examples are the home mortgage interest deduction, capital gains tax, and inheritance tax. But asset-building tax policies can be extended to moderate and poor households through refundable tax provisions and matching deposits, to name two. Again, IDAs could be useful in this effort. Nonprofits working to promote changes in tax policy that benefit low-income individuals and families need continued operating support to sustain their efforts. Foundations can provide vital support in this area.

Creativity, courage, and resources have a clear role in these efforts. By providing much needed leadership and funding, the philanthropic sector can play a critical role in encouraging asset accumulation as part of the daily living patterns of black Americans.

***William J. (Bill) Bynum** is chief executive officer and president of the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta (ECD), a community development financial institution that aims to improve the quality of life for low- and moderate-income residents of the Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi Delta. ECD fulfills its mission by providing financial and technical assistance to Delta firms and entrepreneurs; by forging strategic partnerships with key actors from the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors; and by promoting the development of the region's human and economic assets. Mr. Bynum wrote this piece in collaboration with Mr. Ray Boshara of the Corporation for Enterprise Development in Washington, DC.*

## Lynn Walker Huntley

Philanthropic institutions have a special responsibility to grapple with problems of racism, and its frequent companions, poverty and inequality, in the American South. These problems have deep and pernicious consequences for the health, prosperity, and vitality of the American people, whose welfare such charitable institutions are pledged to serve. Racism contributes to poverty and inequality, wastes talent and public resources, creates conditions in which crime, drug use, and violence thrive, divides

communities, underdevelops the region's economy, creates disharmony, and disserves the national interest. Neglect of such problems can never be benign.

Bearing in mind the diversity of the philanthropic sector in terms of mission, historical interests, geographical constraints, and levels of resources, a point of departure for developing programs responsive to the problems of racism, poverty, and inequality is for each donor institution to ask itself and answer four questions: 1) Who are the poor in my community or service area? 2) What is my institution doing that directly addresses their needs? 3) What information do we need/want in order to consider programming options in this area? 4) How can we develop/enhance work in these areas?

The suggestions that follow speak specifically to the needs of African Americans. Forty-five percent of the nation's black population now reside in the South and constitute a disproportionately large percentage of the region's poor. In focusing on African Americans, no hierarchy of suffering is implied. There are many poor people of other backgrounds in the American South who also need attention. However, the African American population has almost caste-like problems that compound its impoverishment, and these will yield only to targeted efforts. Were donors to implement these suggestions, the impact would affect not only African Americans, but poor Americans more generally.

**Improve Educational Opportunity in Identifiably Black Schools.** The national and regional economies are undergoing a sea change. Low-skill jobs in manufacturing are scarce and declining, and many young people lack the education, skills, and preparation needed to participate in the increasingly technology-driven workforce of the future – or even the service sector. Poor African Americans often have limited educational attainment themselves and lack the information or will to hold public schools accountable. White flight from desegregated public schools has deprived African Americans of needed and valued allies in promoting better quality education. Historically black institutions of higher education, public and private, and two-year institutions are still the spine for most post-secondary education attained by African Americans. Educational institutions at all levels must be helped to improve the quality of education that they provide, enhance retention, and secure adequate public and private funds. The poor African American children to whom we are indifferent today will be the future workforce on which the region will have to rely increasingly. Working to improve educational opportunity for the young people who need it the most is imperative in this era of globalizing economies, technology-driven production, and stepped-up international competition for investment.

**Support Anti-Discrimination Law Enforcement.** Civil rights laws are not self-executing. Government and public interest law organizations have a vital role to play to ensure that the promise of the laws is realized. The nation's handful of civil rights litigation and advocacy organizations are

hard pressed for resources, and everywhere efforts are underway to gut effective remedies to racial discrimination in the areas of education, employment, allocation of public funds and services, training, housing, and political participation. Donors can help to fund these organizations, pool resources to make strategic decisions about funding issues, conduct studies and publicize outcomes about civil rights violations, and help to revitalize public commitment to moving beyond racism. The health of our democratic system of governance is at issue. When government and society fail to be even handed and solicitous of the rights and needs of *all* of the people, the rule of law itself is put at risk.

**Diversify Staffing and Governance.** The nation's philanthropic institutions have not themselves fully responded to the challenge to comprise their own programs, staffs, and boards in ways that encompass the broad diversity of the American people. This should receive prioritized attention. We don't know what we don't know and won't know until we begin talking, working, and interacting with African Americans and other groups whose numbers are spare in the ranks of organized philanthropy.

**Strengthen African American Institutions.** The problems of African Americans are many and the institutions in the community with resources to respond are too few. The African American church is the single most significant network of institutions indigenous to the community that has resources, human and financial, to deploy; a demonstrated track record of achievement in delivering services and providing leadership; access to more hearts and minds than any other comparable institution; and dedicated leaders. Churches operate mentoring programs, after-school and recreational activities, teen parenting classes, neighborhood revitalization and development, senior citizen services, credit unions, small business development, and other such efforts. The National Office on Philanthropy and the Black Church, now housed at the Southern Education Foundation on an interim basis, is a resource to donors interested in working with and learning more about the types of programs that churches provide. The constitutional doctrine of church-state separation is not a bar to grantmaking and collaboration with churches. Since African American churches receive the bulk of the charitable contributions from the black community, they are in a sense philanthropic institutions that ought to be in peer relationships with organized philanthropy.

**"Educational institutions at all levels must be helped to improve the quality of education that they provide, enhance retention, and secure adequate public and private funds."**

In these days of complexity when we know that racism, poverty, and inequality remain features of life in the American South, and indeed the world, we may feel that we haven't the stamina, tools, platform, or muscle adequate to the task, and therefore cannot solve these deeply entrenched

problems. But to my way of thinking, it is not a question of whether donors have the capacity or resources to solve problems, but rather whether we have *the will to make a contribution* to their resolution. It is not only through small and large contributions from diverse quarters on multiple fronts that the hydra of racism, poverty, and inequality can be tamed. No one person, institution or group can solve these problems. But together, we can ameliorate their consequences and over time effect fundamental change.

***Lynn Walker Huntley*** *is director of the Comparative Human Relations Initiative. The Initiative is an effort undertaken by the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) to examine comparatively contemporary patterns of race relations in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States and the implications for policy making and activism in these ventues. Prior to joining the staff of SEF, Ms. Walker Huntley was the director of the Ford Foundation's Rights and Social Justice Program.*

## Martin Lehfeldt

Organized philanthropy faces no shortage of funding options when it seeks to address the triple-threat challenge of racism, poverty, and inequality that continues as the chief obstacle to achieving a democratic society. Programs that support education, employment, and economic empowerment, all of which need and deserve financial support, are among the obvious examples of arenas in which charitable giving can play a vital role.

Yet, when all is said and done, these kinds of answers to the thorny issues that divide us as a people can have but a limited impact. Foundation grants and other institutional generosity – even federal subsidy – will not cure these debilitating diseases that weaken our nation's health.

The "magic bullet" that can eradicate the conditions bred by divisions of race and class is nothing more and nothing less than the will of the American public. Until a significant majority of our citizens understands the negative power that these forces have upon all of our lives and chooses to eliminate them, our other efforts – no matter how well intentioned – will fall short of success.

However, the achievement of this understanding will not occur as the result of mouthing and memorizing theoretical abstractions. A catechism of civic ideals cannot be a substitute for behavioral change. That kind of change has its roots in personal contact and ongoing dialogue.

Years ago, during a period of conflict in Atlanta, I suggested to a small group of leaders who were meeting to discuss responses to the situation that the starting point should be a series of bi-racial cocktail parties to which we would invite people of differing opinions and persuasions. This only partially whimsical notion stemmed from my conviction that the answers to vexing social issues could only be found after

people met face to face and discovered their common ground. By "common ground" I did not have in mind ideological consensus. Rather, I meant that men and women needed to come together in a safe, social setting and talk about football and recipes and gardening and their children and their personal histories. Only then, after establishing an elemental trust of each other as human beings, could they engage in profitable dialogue about bigger matters. I still haven't identified a foundation willing to underwrite my apparently too-simplistic proposal, but I continue to believe that it contains the seed of the solution for our divisions.

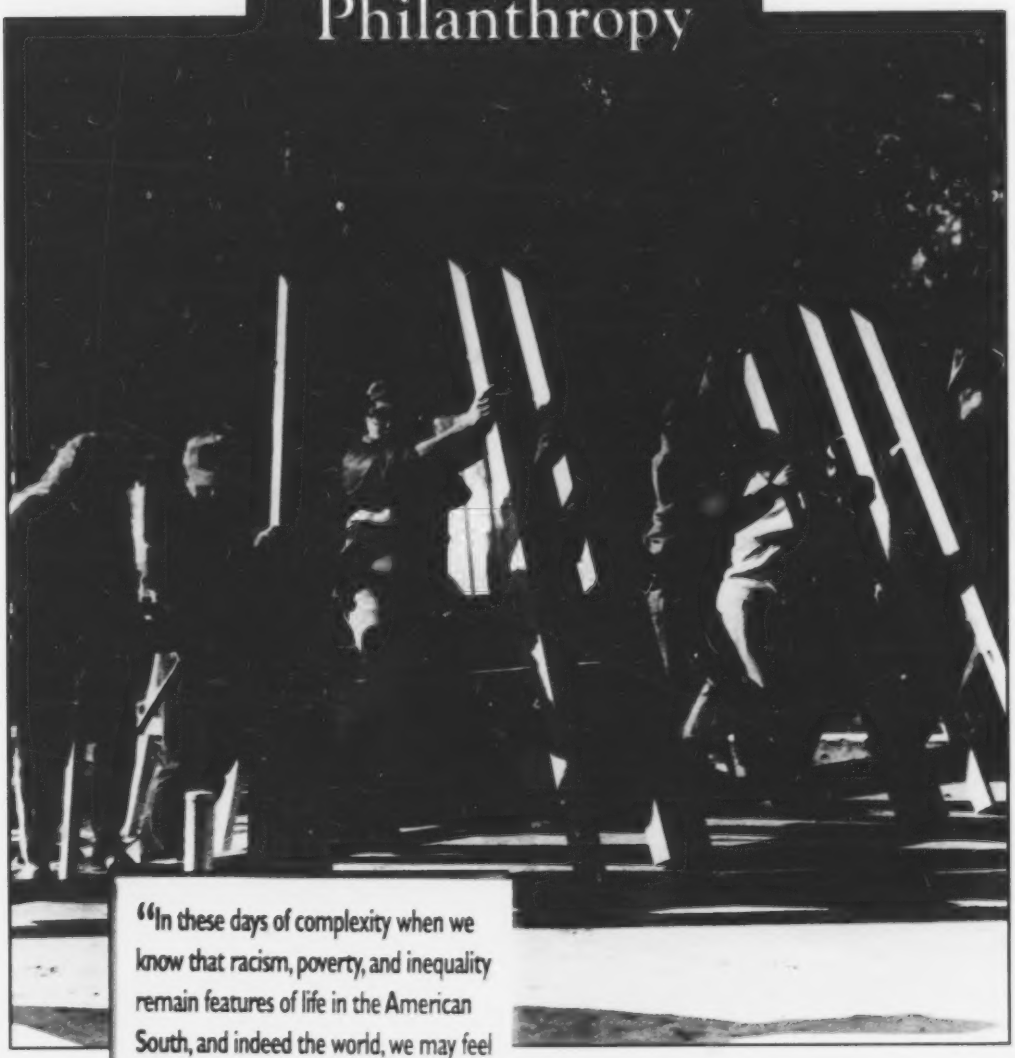
**"Organized philanthropy faces no shortage of funding options when it seeks to address the triple-threat challenge of racism, poverty, and inequality that continues as the chief obstacle to achieving a democratic society."**

All of which is to say that one of the greatest contributions that philanthropy can make to the building of a strong society is to support any effort that brings people together in search of shared responses to common problems. The funding of so-called answers determined in advance by the experts has its place, but the financial support of the questioning process by the people who will be most affected by the answers may have a more lasting impact.

The "Unfinished Business" dialogue that the Jessie Ball duPont Fund has helped to initiate is an illustration of this approach. It is neither a perfect program nor the ultimate answer to racism, poverty, and inequality. Nonetheless, it is an important step in the right direction. To be sure, this approach requires a willingness to listen and a basic trust in our citizens – a belief that, given the opportunity, they have the ability collectively to define their needs and to select the appropriate responses for meeting them. That understanding is central to the ideals of American democracy.

***Martin C. Lehfeldt*** *is president of the Southeastern Council of Foundations, a position he assumed in January 1998, after a career that included work as a newspaper reporter, foundation program officer, college and university development officer, and president of his own consulting firms. He is the co-author of "The Sacred Call: A Tribute to Donald L. Hollowell – Civil Rights Champion." Mr. Lehfeldt contributed a chapter and several other portions to "An Agile Servant," an overview of community foundations in the United States, and has written extensively on issues related to the nonprofit sector.*

# Philanthropy



"In these days of complexity when we know that racism, poverty, and inequality remain features of life in the American South, and indeed the world, we may feel that we haven't the stamina, tools, platform, or muscle adequate to the task, and therefore cannot solve these deeply entrenched problems. But to my way of thinking, it is not a question of whether donors have the capacity or resources to solve problems, but whether we have the *will to make a contribution* to their resolution."

Lynn Walker Huntley

## In This Section


- Lyndhurst Foundation: A Record of Communal Endeavor
- Jessie Ball duPont Fund: An Interview with Sherry Magill
- Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation: Bridging the Faultlines of Race and Class

# Lyndhurst Foundation: A Record of Communal Endeavor

During the past seventeen years, the Lyndhurst Foundation has made deliberate efforts to move beyond the traditional work of foundations – reviewing proposals and making grants – by engaging more fully in the public life and struggles of its hometown community in Chattanooga, Tennessee. As leaders began to address the waning prosperity and confidence of the city and its residents in the early 1980s, Lyndhurst Foundation rolled up its sleeves to join the effort.

From sponsoring a concert series to create shared public space where residents of the city could meet on common ground, to supporting the renovation of substandard housing, to relocating its offices to an inner-city neighborhood, Lyndhurst Foundation has embraced the challenges of rebuilding a fractured community. "We have acted on the belief that those who would be leaders must first be citizens," explains Lyndhurst Foundation President Jack Murrah. "Those who would act wisely must know more than theory and do more than talk."

In the following piece, excerpted from a longer essay and an interview for this publication, Mr. Murrah summarizes three particular lines of experience gathered by the Foundation in its work in Chattanooga: the importance of quality public education, the significance of decent and affordable housing, and the need for comprehensive vision as a catalyst for community revitalization efforts.

## The Backdrop

Chattanooga is a city of the Southern Appalachian hills, lying among the intricate ridges and swells of the eastern edge of the Cumberland Plateau, the west side of the Tennessee Valley. On the east is the Blue Ridge, the Great Smoky Mountains, the cool and rainy forests that draw vacationers and retirees by the millions. On the west is coal and industry, a hotter, drier upland of more development and greater devastation. Long a community torn between love of its natural beauty and dependence on its fiery furnaces, Chattanooga was among the first places in the South to follow the Yankee model of industrial development. Into an almost all-white land of Scotch-Irish farmers, never close kin to the aristocratic, English lowland, plantation South, came businessmen and merchants from points north in search of economic opportunity after the Civil War. The city prospered, and three generations of Chattanoogans made their peace with and made their money off industrial development. By 1970, the city led the nation in the percentage of residents employed in manufacturing. It led in air pollution, too.

Already there was a gathering sense of foreclosure. There were growing tensions as the economy began to falter from the burdens of cleaning up the air pollution and the cross currents of global change. Racial conflicts long buried in both prosperity and segregation

surfaced with the integration of public schools. Class conflicts, heightened by the separate world of private schools and mountain homes established by the wealthy industrialists, took a toll as well. By the time the great recession of 1982 knocked the city flat on its back, we were a community already reeling in economic and social decline. Chattanooga felt like a troubled place from which youth, talent, and confidence flowed, displaced by suspicion, fear, and blame.

## Rediscovering the Public

It was during this time that the city wrangled over the naming of a downtown street for Martin Luther King. Acting upon the advice of a consultant and because of the MLK street controversy, Lyndhurst Foundation decided to present a series of five free concerts in the heart of the city. Drawing upon various musical traditions of our region, including jazz, blues, bluegrass, pop, and country, the concerts were aimed at creating a spirit that John Gardner has recently named "unity incorporating diversity." This episode was the first in the Foundation's life to teach us the importance of wholeness in community.

As a former mayor chided us for the gesture, saying that it was bound to bring troublemakers into the middle of a fragile and failing downtown, we began to realize that becoming a more public presence in the city's life would bring challenges and controversies we had not faced in the simpler practice of reviewing proposals and making grants.

Nevertheless, the concerts succeeded beyond our imagining, bringing thousands of buoyant citizens into the center of the city on summer nights. As each Tuesday evening event passed with no vandalism, no disorder, the crowds grew, and so did the sense of confidence that one could share common ground with strangers. We witnessed the rapid development of new civic manners. Though no one said it at the time, in retrospect it seems clear that the chief value of the project was the formation of a sketchy sense that we were one community, a vision of ourselves as neighbors with a shared destiny.

This transition marks what I would consider to be the greatest change in Chattanooga from the early 1980s to the present. Perhaps in response to the hopelessness and bitterness of seeing a community in decline, people were disparaging of their hometown, looking to other cities' success stories as confirmation of our haplessness. But two community planning initiatives in the early and mid-1980s – one focused on a 600-acre piece of riverfront property owned jointly by the city and county governments, the other led by a core group of civic leaders who had become convinced that the entire community needed an opportunity to discuss what kind of place we wanted to be by 2000 – challenged Chattanooga to bring forth all we had and develop a vision for our collective future.

**"As each Tuesday evening event passed with no vandalism, no disorder, the crowds grew, and so did the sense of confidence that one could share common ground with strangers."**

Lyndhurst Foundation supported the entire operation of Chattanooga Venture, the organization formed to facilitate the second initiative that began in 1984. Venture was conceived as a "facilitator of civic initiative," first through a visioning exercise and then through the mobilization and support of volunteer groups to pursue the elements of the vision. During the next ten years, the community saw, among other accomplishments, the construction of the world's largest freshwater aquarium, a new airport, and a safe place for victims of family violence. In half the time we gave ourselves to do it, the citizens of Chattanooga realized the portfolio of about 40 goals that had emerged from the Vision 2000 project.

## Schools

There is perhaps no arena of American endeavor where vision and a shared sense of destiny are more lacking than public education. It is an arena of American endeavor at once most dear and most endangered. Parents, neighborhoods, and school districts are pitted against one another on matters closest and dearest to them – their own children. Our national conversations about public education and systemic reform have focused attention on what and how children are to be taught, and have ignored, or claimed as beyond our control, whether or not they have learned. Only now are we able to see that education must be funded, regulated, and reformed from the perspective, not of teaching, but of learning.

It is far from certain whether this nation will ultimately transform public education into a more free and responsible enterprise, where the successful education of every child is the object of the game – not the subjection of every child to a standardized process with highly variable and unsatisfactory results. The record of our progress toward that goal in Chattanooga offers hope, so let me go back to our city in the early 1980s.

In 1983, Lyndhurst Foundation hosted a series of conversations regarding *The Paideia Proposal*. We found the book provocative in its assertion that every child would be well served by the same intellectually rich academic challenge. Thinking about social and academic differences among children, the proposal argued, had resulted in our cheating many of them of the development that they needed to thrive as complete human beings. With cramped notions about their potential and in dangerous sympathy with their difficult social conditions, we had denied poor children access to what we provided to the best and brightest children.

Early in 1984, a rag-tag band of idealists and pragmatists decided to join forces with the Foundation in seeking the permission of the local school board to establish a pioneering public school to test the principles of *The Paideia Proposal*. We made our approach and were astounded to be accepted. In the fall of 1986, the Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences opened with an enrollment of 400. Within four years, the enrollment stood at 1,100, evenly balanced between black and white children, with long waiting lists for all grades. In its fifth year, public pressure brought about the opening of a second similar school. It quickly filled its capacity of 400.

The schools' commitment to social diversity, their requirement of parental involvement, and their strong interactive curriculum for all children challenged the pattern of segregation of our public schools, as well as the practice of academic tracking, didactic teaching, and the alienation of parents from the professionally dominated process of education. The contribution they have made to the system and to the community, beyond those families that have participated in the program, is the vision of a higher standard, a direct challenge to our satisfaction with the meager results that we have traditionally achieved with disadvantaged children. The appeal of this experiment was further affirmed when local civic leaders, including leadership of Lyndhurst Foundation, formed a public education foundation in 1989 to stimulate and coordinate private investment in public education.

**"There is perhaps no arena of American endeavor where vision and a shared sense of destiny are more lacking than public education. It is an arena of American endeavor at once most dear and most endangered."**

In 1994, the Hamilton County school board turned, somewhat apprehensively, to the **Public Education Foundation** to provide resources and leadership to engage the community in developing a framework for a new consolidated system. Earlier that year, a racially divided city council approved placing on the ballot an initiative to cease operating a separate school system, thereby forcing the county to absorb the city schools. The voters in the city approved the measure.

The situation could hardly have been less promising. The county school system was over 95 percent white, while the city system was 65 percent black. The county residents, overwhelmingly opposed to the merger, had not had an opportunity to vote. With relatively high scores on the state standardized tests, the county system was traditional and saw little need for reform; the city system, awash in innovations, saw their own scores sinking.

Nevertheless, an unwieldy but determined planning committee of 36 citizens, half of whom were professionals within the school systems and half of whom were civic leaders, parents, and business figures, spent a tumultuous six months hammering out a plan under the sponsorship of the Public Education Foundation. As a member of the committee, I often thought how essential a feature of democracy this work seemed to be and how useful (and exhausting) it would be if every citizen could go through this process.

In the end, the framework the committee crafted was conceptually rich, reflecting practical wisdom about the mechanics of schooling and far-reaching insight about shifting to a system driven by results. It called for smaller neighborhood schools, high standards for all children, a greater level of involvement from parents and community in school governance, and greater attention to children's early years.

The presentation of the plan set off a firestorm, with accusations and maneuvers that shed little light and brought little credit

to anyone. Through it all, the Public Education Foundation kept presenting the elements of the plan to the public and kept building greater awareness of the vision it embodied. Wherever it received an open hearing, it was received enthusiastically.

County school board elections were held that August. The long-standing chair of the school board, a popular defender of the existing system, was defeated. Three candidates who associated themselves with the concepts of the new framework won decisive victories, defeating candidates who had associated themselves with the existing regime. Overnight the fires of controversy had died.

From its initial investment in the pioneering school in Chattanooga, to its involvement in the creation of a public education foundation, to its present commitment of $2.5 million over five years to create a new unified system, Lyndhurst Foundation has been an energizer of civic initiative for results-oriented public school reform. This work takes place on highly visible and hotly contested ground; civic activists are not often welcome. But the demands of citizenship and leadership do not permit the abandonment of school reform as a centerpiece of community betterment.

## Homes

As we have ventured into the public and committed ourselves to participating as engaged citizens in the life of Chattanooga, Lyndhurst Foundation has come to heightened appreciation of the importance of home and neighborhood. Homes are fundamental to communal life; neighborhoods provide a place for relationships to be transformed. Strangers evolve slowly over time into neighbors.

A few years ago, Lyndhurst Foundation renovated an 1880 house in the Brabson Hill neighborhood and moved our office there. Before World War II and the great American move to the suburbs, pharmacies, grocers, churches, and schools thrived among the grand homes and modest family dwellings on Brabson Hill. By 1980, the neighborhood had become a scene of dereliction. Its streets projected the fearful message of the late twentieth century: City equals Poverty equals Death.

By moving our office to Brabson Hill and making a loan to a local nonprofit housing developer to purchase and renovate three butterscotch-colored houses in the neighborhood into affordable housing for the poor, we hoped to revive local confidence in the old urban model of neighborhoods where a variety of institutions and families could live together in a compact and walkable grid – and in so doing have a more satisfying communal life than we can have when we live apart in sprawling residential and commercial pods segregated by class and function. Our partnership with that non-profit housing developer, **Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise** (CNE), has extended over a decade.

CNE has developed four areas of expertise. It provides second mortgages that reduce the down payment for low-income home buyers; it makes low-interest loans to low-income home owners with homes in disrepair. CNE offers credit counseling to prepare customers for handling their credit responsibilities, and it develops housing for sale and rent to low-income citizens.

Through this combination of activities, almost 4,000 families have improved their housing situations and become citizens with a stake in their neighborhoods and assets on their books. CNE has resisted the traditional role of grantmaker in its work with low-income residents, instead focusing on making the instruments of credit and investment work for the poor. To date, the default rate for CNE loans is lower than most banks' mortgage portfolios.

We like to think of this as a powerful demonstration of the capacity of a community to design its own solution to an achingly large and complex problem. But it has taken favorable federal and state policies and the availability of federal and state resources to make our system work. Given those conditions, any community could put together such a system, though it has taken an unprecedented level of cooperation between public and private forces to make it succeed in our community. The financial mechanisms are sophisticated, but not esoteric. The philanthropic and local government resources required are large, but not beyond reach.

## Vision

The clearest lesson that we can draw from our experiences in Chattanooga is that a comprehensive vision, generated and embraced by public process, has the capacity to unify and energize a community. We have learned that projects seen in a broader context of overall community revitalization have more appeal to donors, more credibility with lenders, more approval from a tax-wary public. The use of vision as a catalyst for both unity and hope has become the hallmark of Chattanooga's recovery. We have proven that vision – when accompanied by cooperation, collaboration, partnership, and perseverance – can bring strangers together in public space. It can be the catalyst for better schools and stronger neighborhoods.

The challenges before Southern communities are significant at this point in history. Racism, poverty, and inequality are tireless foes of the human spirit. Those of us in the world of philanthropy can easily choose to retreat to our privileged sanctuary where abstraction and theory provide safety and comfort. We can also choose to embrace the fullness of our communities, even the unlovely and unknown parts., We can choose to make a difference, realizing that we must put much at risk. Should we choose the latter, let us proceed with vision and an unwavering love of humanity.

***Jack E. Murrah*** *is president of the Lyndhurst Foundation in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He serves as a board member of the Council on Foundations and as vice-chairman of the board of the Public Education Foundation.*

# Jessie Ball duPont Fund: An Interview with Sherry Magill —

In addition to convening leaders in Chapel Hill and Birmingham as part of the "Unfinished Business" project, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund sponsored four community meetings in its hometown of Jacksonville, Florida, in early 1998. The meetings were designed to bring residents together to consider the effects of racism, poverty, and inequality in Jacksonville. Roughly 150 citizens participated in the gatherings. Similar meetings, sponsored by community and regional foundations, followed in Atlanta, Birmingham, New Orleans, Memphis, Richmond, and Jackson (MS).

Beyond complementing the "Unfinished Business" program, the meetings gave duPont Fund staff and trustees greater insight into the delicate process of convening a broad base of citizens around a controversial set of topics. "We came to new understanding about our role – and the role other foundations can play – in convening local groups and initiating the hard work of community change," says duPont Fund Executive Director Sherry Magill. In the following interview excerpts, Dr. Magill reflects on lessons learned from the Jacksonville experience.

## On Dialogue and Action

"The Jacksonville meetings made me aware of the acute tension between people who want to talk and people who want to take action. Our forum gave members of the first group a starting point for dealing with tough questions that elude simple answers. Some participants asked themselves questions like, 'Why didn't I go to school with children of different races?' or 'Why were blacks and whites so divided by the O.J. Simpson verdict?' By talking through issues of race and class, participants have the opportunity to begin the slow process of establishing relationships with people unlike themselves and overcoming long-held misperceptions of one another.

"The second group of people who attended the forums was clearly frustrated by conversation. They had participated in similar discussions in school or with their colleagues at work and were ready to engage in action. For this group, the Jacksonville meetings provided access to allies, to a network of people who share common concerns. Our hope is that many in this camp will connect with people outside their neighborhoods or workplaces who want to think critically about how to address institutional racism.

"The different yet equally important vantage points of these two groups challenged all of us to understand the inextricable link between conversation and action. Without disciplined reflection about a city's past and present, movement toward its future can become misdirected and unfocused. This movement becomes activity for its own sake, leaving behind no trace of authentic community change. Without action, conversation becomes hollow. Long-lasting change within communities can only result from the cooperative efforts of those who talk about and envision necessary changes and those who are inspired to enact them."

## Lessons Learned

***On the importance of creating safe space:*** "We used the *Hard Talk* model developed by the Kettering Foundation as a starting point for conversation. Participants were asked to identify Jacksonville's assets and to describe their vision for the city's future. They also engaged in difficult conversation about the history of racism, poverty, and inequality in Jacksonville. Most participants were able to express what they liked about living in Jacksonville and what they would like to see change. This part of the conversation fostered a level of comfort and trust among strangers at the table. But when the conversation turned to issues of racism, poverty, and inequality, some participants became cautious and much too suspicious. I sensed that it was difficult – if not impossible – for many people to acknowledge that the color of a person's skin or the zip code where a person lives might play a large part in determining how that person experiences and understands the world.

"For example, one resident from a public housing site explained that a lack of public transportation made it difficult for her and her neighbors to get to the grocery store. Another participant was visibly frustrated by her complaint, suggesting that the woman call her city council representative to resolve the problem. After the public housing resident responded that contact with her representative had yielded no results, the conversation came to a halt. The woman from public housing withdrew from the conversation; her point of view and experience were neither understood nor validated by some participants. At that moment I realized what a critical role facilitators play in the process. We needed someone who could create a safe space, who could guide us from an awkward and uncomfortable moment to mutual insight and understanding."

***On the role of history:*** "The critical role of history is too often overlooked in the current racism debate in America. People question the value of studying our past and where we've been; they favor looking to the future and focusing on where we want to be. From the community meetings, we learned the importance of reckoning with history and struggling to understand how the past shapes and informs the present.

"The conversation that brought this issue to the forefront centered around consolidation in Jacksonville – when the county and city governments merged. As a relative newcomer to Jacksonville, I had always heard that consolidation was a defining moment in the city's history. It was the moment that put Jacksonville on the map and paved the way for a prosperous future. But at the forums, the African American participants at my table talked

**"Without these conversations – without people having the opportunity to hear and be heard – I seriously doubt that reconciliation can take place in our community and in our nation."**

about consolidation as a movement by the white power structure to deny Jacksonville the leadership of a black mayor. It's a very different story, a different interpretation of the same event.

"If we had the forums to do over again, I would focus more on local history. Rather than commissioning an academic to write a book about the city, I'd be intentional about creating time for people to share their stories and their memories of the people and events that shaped Jacksonville. Without these conversations – without people having the opportunity to hear and be heard – I seriously doubt that reconciliation can take place in our community and in our nation."

***On engaging the corporate community:*** "As successful as the Fund was in engaging people from city government, neighborhoods, and grassroots organizations in the forums, we failed miserably in terms of corporate engagement. We assumed that corporations would be interested in and committed to the effort, and we never made any personal contact to engage their leadership in the work.

"In retrospect, we should have made a concerted effort to target the home-grown businesses that have created and kept wealth in Jacksonville. Businesses like AccuStaff, SteinMart, and WinnDixie are responsible for an enormous number of jobs in our town, and their leaders have made a dual commitment to building their companies and to strengthening the local community. It's easy to fall into the trap of looking to larger national companies with offices in Jacksonville for leadership and participation. And, clearly, they have a critical role to play. But national companies don't necessarily bring the long-term commitment to place and community that is essential if Jacksonville hopes to address the persistent issues of racism and inequality."

## Reflections

***On access:*** "When we sat down almost eighteen months ago to give a name to this project, most of the people at the table had a general understanding of what was meant by racism and poverty. Inequality was the enigma. We had a vague sense that what we meant was unequal access to power in a democratic society, namely unequal access to public money and to the people who make the decisions which shape our public life.

"Over the course of the forums, my understanding of inequality was heightened by conversations with residents of public housing. One of the lessons I learned was that this portion of Jacksonville's citizenry possesses an acute understanding of how the city works. They know who has power, who controls money, and how decisions are made. What they don't have is access to the people who make decisions. Their efforts to contact the mayor, their council representatives, and others in positions of power are taken less seriously than those of citizens who possess financial and social capital.

"This is where philanthropic institutions can play an important role. They can improve access for people and communities on the periphery by funding and supporting

the intensive processes of community-based organizing, which allows people to mobilize collective resources, and coalition building, which allows disparate groups to identify common problems and work to develop common solutions."

***On public education:*** "One thing I've come to realize, from the first meeting in Chapel Hill to the conversations in Jacksonville, is that all this work – all the conversations around racism, poverty, and inequality – ultimately leads to public education. Thomas Jefferson had it right: if the public expects the masses to be good citizens – to be citizens who will carry out their public responsibilities – the public has to invest in the education of all its people.

**"Deep in our collective conscience, we're not sure that all people can learn and that all people are worthy of public investment and public resources. Our collective future demands that we challenge this illogic."**

"One of the greatest tragedies since the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision has been the emotional disinvestment in public schools throughout the South. My fear is that this disinvestment has everything to do with the racial integration of public schools. Deep in our collective conscience, we're not sure that all people can learn and that all people are worthy of public investment and public resources. Our collective future demands that we challenge this illogic.

"Here too, the philanthropic community can make a difference by supporting public education as a means for community and economic development. For example, a number of promising collaborations exist between foundations, employers, community groups, and educators to improve public education as a strategy for developing a well-trained, highly-skilled workforce. A well-educated workforce can attract industrial and corporate growth, and it can prepare communities to adapt quickly to changes in the economic environment. In addition, philanthropic institutions can help link middle and secondary schools with community colleges and four-year educational institutions to increase students' awareness of postsecondary options, to foster the sharing of resources between institutions, and to make sure that students are well prepared in the early grades for what they must know to succeed in high school and beyond."

***Dr. Sherry P. Magill*** *has served as executive director of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund since 1993. She is a member of the board of directors of the Southeastern Council of Foundations and is chair of the Florida Funders Group.*

# Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation: Bridging the Faultlines of Race and Class

— In 1994, the Directors of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation began an intensive process of reflection and learning to determine the course its grantmaking should take into the 21st century. The process resulted in a deliberate decision to move from project-based grantmaking across a wide array of interests and goals to a more comprehensive approach that focused on organizational, community, and grassroots capacity building for those nonprofits working to "build just and caring communities" in the Southeast. More specifically, as part of their revised mission statement, Directors stipulated: "We are deeply troubled by the debilitating impact of persistent poverty and racism on the human spirit and on community life in our region; therefore, we seek demonstrable progress in areas where poverty prevails and race divides." Throughout the process, the Foundation has made public its own experiences with organizational restructuring and capacity building in the hope that its work to craft an effective strategy for change might guide or inspire others interested in the process.

The following piece highlights some of the lessons learned during Babcock's mid-course review of its revised grantmaking strategy (performed in 1997-1998). The Foundation's Executive Director Gayle Williams also explains how these lessons are influencing the Foundation's plans for the future.

## Why Organizational Capacity Building and Leadership Development?

When the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation set out in 1994 to consider its future, the Directors asked: What is the most essential work the Foundation can do? During the first nine months of the restructuring process, while hashing over values and goals, they came to consensus around one course of action: that the issues and effects of poverty and race which pervade the South need to be addressed through the Foundation's work. But the Directors felt strongly that identifying needs and problems in communities was not the way to make them stronger. Rather, they wanted to focus on assets and on citizens working together across lines of difference. "Every community has assets that can be marshaled to make it better," notes Executive Director Gayle Williams. "And we had the suspicion that despite all of the bad news we hear and the racial divides that do exist, there were many people and communities working with goodwill and a lot of skill to tackle the divisions of race and class. It's easy to get jaded about the public's ability; it's easy to be pessimistic. But that's not the whole story. Across the Southeast, good people are doing good work – and having good results." The Babcock Foundation decided that supporting organizations and communities in the region that were doing this work was not only

consistent with its history of grantmaking, but represented a positive approach to dealing with community need as well.

Through the three grantmaking strategies that emerged from its restructuring process – the Organizational Development and Community Problem Solving programs (begun in 1995 and 1996) and Grassroots Leadership Development grants (developed in 1997) – the Babcock Foundation seeks to develop organizations' capacity to fulfill their missions and sustain their work by supporting the implementation of specific organizational development activities, aiding networks and associations that link natural and unusual allies, nurturing new and diverse leadership, and encouraging public dialogue and participation in the political process.

## Some Lessons Learned...

To date, the Foundation has made nearly 100 Organizational Development, Community Problem Solving, and Grassroots Leadership Development grants. The results have confirmed that there are brave, talented people – often nontraditional leaders – who are willing and able to do the work of addressing racism and poverty. Furthermore, the Foundation has learned that investing in capacity-building activities for organizations and communities can stimulate authentic change by empowering the disenfranchised to understand their situations and to envision and enact their own futures. These capacity-building programs foster change that is *by* and *for* the people who need it.

Grantees agree that empowerment is a key to organizational success. "Working class ownership of the change initiatives, coupled with the training and technical assistance we receive from the Babcock Organizational Development grant, is changing the face of this community," says Art Carter, executive director of the **Virginia Eastern Shore Economic Empowerment and Housing Corporation** (VESEEHC). "For the first time in 140 years, working class residents of this community have a sense of hope that their conditions can change – that *they* can change their conditions." VESEEHC serves residents of Northampton and Accomack Counties in Virginia, where unemployment runs twice as high as the state average and 21 percent of the residents live below the poverty line. Twelve percent of the counties' residents live without indoor plumbing. VESEEHC's mission is to eliminate poverty and substandard housing in these counties by organizing communities to implement their own development plans, engaging directly in housing production, and providing economic development lending.

Of the Babcock Organizational Development grant, Carter says, "It hit us like a thunderbolt – it made us realize how important organizational development was in our effort to become a learning organization, one that could adapt quickly to change." VESEEHC used Babcock funding to create a plan for community development, an employee handbook, a set of operations policies, and a comprehensive fundraising strategy. When they shared their results with the Department of Agriculture, that agency sent VESEEHC

materials out to all fifty states as an example of good organizational guidelines. Their capacity-building programs have also earned VESEEHC the 1996 Center for Community Change Leonard Lessor Award.

More importantly, adds Carter, the work has brought hope and confidence to the people that VESEEHC serves. They have succeeded in building:

- an early childhood program for children of homeless and low-income citizens;
- the area's only transitional home for the homeless;
- a home ownership training program that helps working class citizens apply for mortgages and build affordable homes; and
- utility and rental assistance programs.

VESEEHC also facilitates community organizing. Their efforts have aided the New Road Community Development Group, a 501(c)(3) organization designed and operated entirely by working-class people. Before New Road CDG was organized, 80 percent of the 100 households in the New Road area had no indoor plumbing; all were owned by two slum landlords. Over the past six years, the group has bought out the landlords, renovated some dilapidated housing, and purchased property for new housing. "VESEEHC based its support for New Road on the Babcock model and required that they use one-fourth of our funding for organizational development and capacity building," explains Art Carter. "It has been a powerful experience for the residents. It was their vision. They made the decisions."

Beyond the importance of supporting community ownership, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation has learned the value of providing time and resources to organizations for critical reflection and learning. Their Organizational Development and Community Problem Solving grants afford groups the opportunity to reflect on their history, to come to an understanding of their circumstances, and to determine the best ways to move forward. "It's very basic and true," says Beatrice Clark Shelby, executive director of **Boys, Girls, Adults Community Development Center (BGACDC),** a Babcock Organizational Development grantee. "If a person does not know his or her history then he or she is doomed to repeat it. If children or adults can't read and compare their experiences against those in books, they won't know if they're being discriminated against. The same goes for organizations. If they don't understand the history of their communities, it's difficult for them to begin the process of change."

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BGACDC provides social, educational, recreational, economic, health, and housing opportunities to low- to moderate-income

residents of Marvell in the Arkansas Delta. Of the county's 28,000 residents, approximately 85 percent are African American. Many of the county's working-class residents feel the adverse effects of geographical isolation, dispersed population clusters, high unemployment, and poverty.

Shelby believes that organizational development support helps sustain nonprofits so they can increase the effectiveness of their program work. She explains: "The grant has built our capacity and the capacity of those we serve. By building capacity I mean the process by which people are empowered with education and skills to enhance their quality of life and sustainability and to develop a sense of commitment and shared vision within their communities." The OD grant has supported staff development; board effectiveness training; the use of technology to streamline operations and network with other community development programs; workshops on effective financial management, strategic planning, and grant writing; and efforts to foster a stronger working relationship between black and white residents of the town. In addition to providing the financial resources for these programs, Babcock linked BGACDC to technical assistance and external resources as they expanded their efforts to help area residents.

> **"Foundations can do a great service to organizations and communities by taking a long-term perspective on their work and by setting discrete, manageable, and mutually acceptable benchmarks."**

In 1997, BGACDC served 560 children from ages birth to 18. The organization owns or manages 68 housing units, which it has been rehabilitating into livable housing *and* using as a job site to train young people for work in building and contracting trades. The Center currently employs 30 full-time young people in its day care program, after-school care program, "Freedom School" summer camp, mentoring programs, nationally recognized Home Improvement Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), and the Best Food in Town restaurant, among other programs. Though BGACDC has not yet met all of its organizational development goals, Beatrice Clark Shelby acknowledges the importance of the process: "You have to face your past and your current reality before you can address your future vision. The Babcock grant for organizational development is helping us put many pieces together which will help us to continue to serve – and to serve better – the children and families in our community."

The Babcock Foundation also has learned a number of lessons from its work with coalitions in the Community Problem Solving grant program. In supporting formal and informal alliances between various and diverse stakeholders in specific issues, Williams explains, "we've seen several organizations come together across race and income lines to deepen their commitment to one another and to the difficult work of making their communities better." For

example, Babcock supports the work of **the Jeremiah Group** in New Orleans, a group of African American and white citizens concerned about education, housing, and employment opportunities for low-income people in the city. The Community Problem Solving grant enabled Jeremiah's 53 constituent organizations – including religious congregations, five school-based teams, a tenants association, a university, and a small business – to hire an organizer to work with school-based teams on public school reform. In Kentucky, Babcock was the first foundation to support the **Owsley County (KY) Action Team,** a group of citizens who seek to improve the quality of life and increase civic commitment to democratic government in one of the poorest counties in Appalachia. Their Community Problem Solving grant supports the Action Team's work to encourage entrepreneurial spirit (through a mentoring network) in a county where experience with economic independence and risk taking is slim.

Finally, through its Grassroots Leadership Development grants – launched in June 1998 – the Foundation hopes to build the capacity of grassroots leaders to influence state policy. For example, Montgomery, Alabama's **Arise Citizen's Policy Project,** a coalition of 115 religious and community groups, will use Babcock funding to train grassroots leaders in how to influence state policy and achieve specific short-term policy objectives. Their goals include raising welfare benefits by $10 per month; increasing the amount appropriated for subsidized child care by $7.5 million; approving a $12 million bond issue for small business job creation; and increasing funding for the Children's Health Insurance program by $5 million. Another group, the Atlanta-based **Center for Children and Education** will use Babcock funds to start its "Grassroots Engagement Project." The project will train a core group of 50 grassroots leaders to address a set of interrelated "equal access" issues that include funding allocations to benefit students currently placed in bottom-level, overcrowded classes; the detracking of middle school students to increase the number of students prepared for college education; and funding for support services such as tutoring.

## ...and Emergent Themes

The Foundation has culled four common themes from its extensive evaluation of the capacity-building grant programs.

1. ***The importance of relationships.*** Strong relationships can make a difference in an organization's ability to accomplish its goals. When staffs and boards trust and respect each other, the quality and quantity of their work increases exponentially. Likewise, strong relationships between funders and grantees can affect organizations' ability to accomplish goals. Babcock grantees have reported that the Foundation's capacity-building grants and its three- to five-year commitment to grantees have paved the way for stronger, more honest relationships between grantees and the Foundation.

2. ***The amount of time it takes to build effective organizations and coalitions.*** The process of building effective organizations requires time and patience, and the desired community change outcomes take a long time to unfold. Furthermore, different groups and communities change at different paces. Foundations can do a great service to organizations and communities by taking a long-term perspective on their work and by setting discrete, manageable, and mutually acceptable benchmarks. Benchmarks create a system of accountability that keeps grantees on track and enables the foundation to offer assistance as the need arises.

3. ***The value of peer learning and support.*** Grantees relish the opportunity to come together to share lessons learned. At Babcock "Gatherings," they found the moral support of their peers and created strategic alliances for ongoing support. By providing opportunities for shared learning, funders can educate and support people in organizations and help them form partnerships. This type of convening can leverage the body of knowledge and experience gathered through foundation programs to help a wider circle of groups and communities.

4. ***The positive impacts of values-driven grantmaking.*** Many practitioners and funders have responded favorably to the Babcock Foundation's public statement of purpose and values, which expresses the Foundation's commitment to addressing issues of racism and poverty and to building just and caring communities. The Directors and staff of the Foundation believe that by focusing and honing its resources – and by committing to a specific underlying set of values – they stand a better chance of making a difference in the communities they wish to serve.

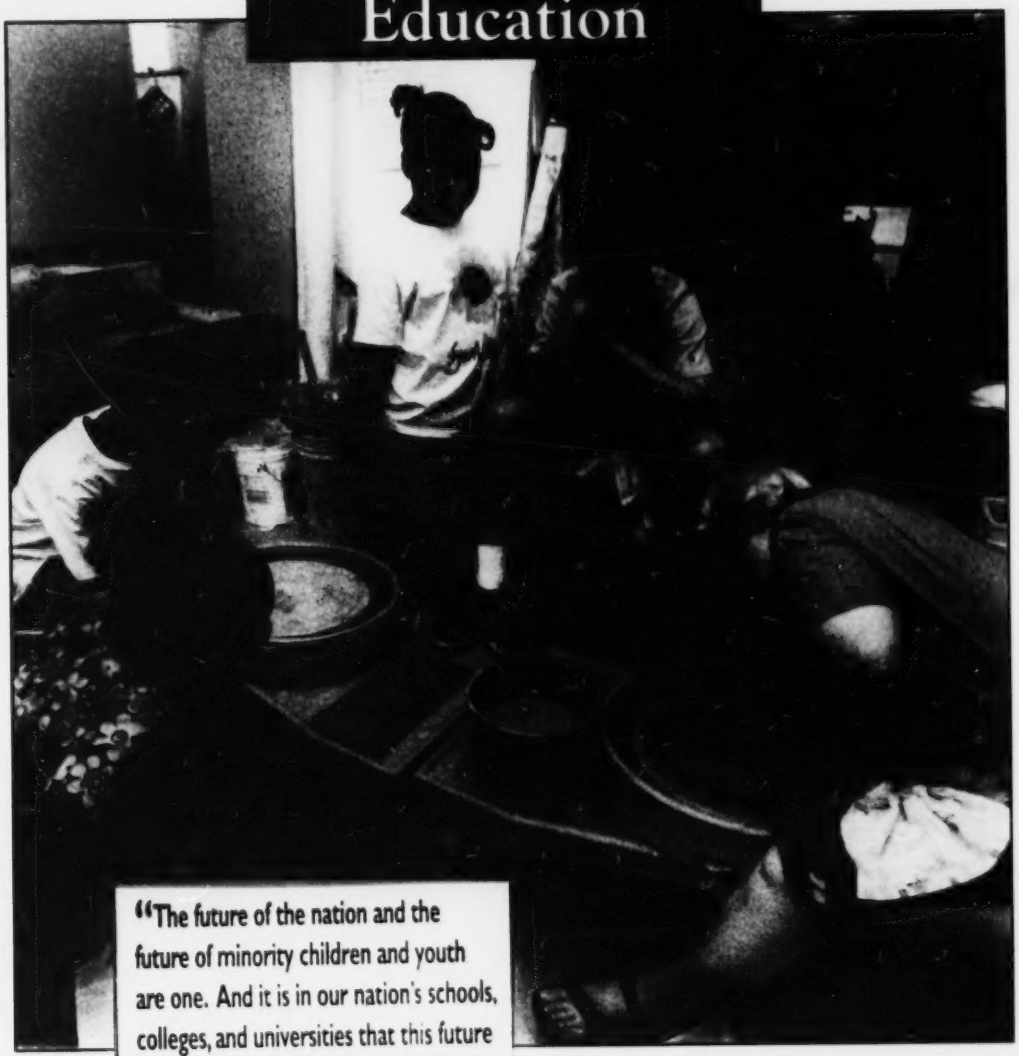
While the process of changing its approach to grantmaking has required considerable time and effort on the part of its Directors and staff, the Babcock Foundation has learned many valuable lessons that will continue to inform its work. "We have definitely learned that organizations and individuals who make a difference maintain a respectful love of people and place; a passion for justice; effective and strategic program activities; creativity in seeking solutions and building assets; and stamina to stay the course when the going gets tough," says Williams. "Capacity-building grants strengthen these organizations' effectiveness and sustainability for the long-term work of reducing poverty and racism."

***Gayle Williams** is executive director of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She currently chairs Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families and serves on the board of the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute.*

"Across the Southeast, good people are doing good work – and having good results."

– Gayle Williams

# Education



"The future of the nation and the future of minority children and youth are one. And it is in our nation's schools, colleges, and universities that this future can be determined. It will be shaped by our success in developing and utilizing the talents of an increasingly diverse population. Our educational institutions must prepare students to live and work in a new environment and, in so doing, strengthen both the fabric of our society and our connections to each other."

— Redeeming the American Promise, Southern Education Foundation

## In This Section

- The BellSouth Foundation: Recreating Colleges of Teacher Education
- The Rural Community College Initiative: Increasing Access to Education
- "Learning from the Past, Anticipating the Future: The Role of Historically Black Colleges" by Dr. Norman C. Francis

**The BellSouth Foundation: Recreating Colleges of Teacher Education** — Since its inception in 1987, the BellSouth Foundation has invested more than $32 million in the nine Southern states served by the BellSouth Corporation: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Inspired by John Clendenin, the first CEO of the Corporation, the Foundation has remained true to its original mission: to improve education for all children in the South.

In 1995, BellSouth Foundation crafted a five-year grantmaking program to guide its work between 1996 and 2000. In addition, it launched eight special initiatives to provide targeted support in areas critical to educational reform, including an initiative to recreate colleges of teacher education. The Foundation issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to colleges of teacher education throughout the region and selected eight institutions to participate in the program: Berry College, East Carolina University, Fort Valley State University, Furman University, University of Alabama at Birmingham, University of Florida, University of Louisville, and Western Kentucky University.

In the narrative that follows, BellSouth Foundation Executive Director Leslie J. Graitcer describes the evaluation process that preceded development of the five-year grantmaking program, reflects on the state of public education in the South, and discusses the Foundation's decision to invest in teacher preparation.

## A Scrutinizing Gaze

In 1995, as we had done in 1990, the BellSouth Foundation invested human and financial capital into evaluating our work. Our underlying objective was to improve the quality of education in the South by focusing our grantmaking. To this end, we invited consultants and advisors who were committed to educational excellence to work with us during this period of self-scrutiny and reflection and to offer their own critical insights about how philanthropic institutions and businesses might contribute to educational reform.

At the end of that year, our advisors suggested that we target our resources to meet more specific goals, and they unanimously recommended that we seek "improved learning" as the outcome of our investments. They urged us to focus our investment on primary and secondary education and to explore ways in which institutions of higher education can collaborate with primary and secondary schools for mutual reward.

## The Public in Public Education

During our year of evaluation and planning, we took care to examine the changing context of the South. It was our contention then, and remains so to this day, that decisions related to philanthropic investments must be informed by critical analysis of the external operating environment. In other words, context matters.

What we learned from our survey of the landscape in 1995 was that efforts to improve education in the South occur in an environment that could be described as volatile. This volatility arose out of economic insecurity, a lack of faith in the ability of government to make a difference in people's lives, and a consequent unwillingness on the part of a significant and growing proportion of the population to be taxed for public investments that are perceived as non-productive. We sensed growing disillusionment and disenchantment with public institutions, including public education.

**"Evidence suggests that investments by philanthropy and business – when coupled with higher expectations, a focus on results, and especially caring, competent teachers – can make a difference in the academic performance of children."**

The lack of confidence in public education and reluctance to support educational improvement have resulted in ever widening faultlines of race and class that have turned public schools into battlegrounds. Many public schools, in both urban and rural areas, have become refuges for the less well-off. At the same time, more and more students attend schools that are predominantly one-race. Minority children often are enrolled in schools that have significantly fewer resources than those attended by their majority-race peers. Public education, conceived as part of an egalitarian experiment, now often exacerbates the differences it was established to eradicate.

Another important finding made during the period of evaluation was that student achievement in the BellSouth states – according to state testing programs – had been improving slightly during the first five years of the 1990s. Students throughout the South have begun taking more challenging courses, with significantly higher numbers in advanced placement courses. Southern states have mandated student achievement goals and programs to help students meet higher standards, as well as new accountability systems to monitor progress on these fronts. Evidence suggests that investments by philanthropy and business – when coupled with higher expectations, a focus on results, and especially caring, competent teachers – can make a difference in the academic performance of children.

Despite these advances, we learned that there are large gaps between the achievements of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The scores of blacks and Hispanics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the Scholastic Assessment Test, and the American College Test are improving, but they continue to be significantly lower than those of white students. The Southern Regional Education Board noted that for "states to develop a competitive work force, these gaps must be closed" – and in ways that assure equity. Unfortunately, commitment to educational equity on the part of federal and state governments is diminishing. Recent legislation mandating federal-state cooperation on a variety of educational improvement issues substantially ignores the equity agenda.

A final learning affirmed what we had begun to suspect: teachers' roles and responsibilities have increased dramatically, and their impact on students' learning is primary. Successful teachers are more than classroom presences; they are leaders inside and outside the classroom. And the demands on teachers are increasing every day. Teachers must be technologically competent. They must be able to work responsibly and constructively with students from diverse social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. If they are to prepare children for the rapidly changing economy, where competencies and the capacity to learn will be prerequisites for well-paying jobs, teachers must develop new strategies for educating our young people.

## Recreating Colleges of Teacher Education

Despite the growing demands on teachers, too many colleges of teacher education are still preparing teachers for yesterday's classrooms, using yesterday's methods and curricula. They cling to traditional methods of teacher preparation that have grown obsolete and that compromise the future of our children and the region.

Our decision to invest up to $2 million in eight colleges and universities throughout the South to recreate colleges of teacher education grew out of the fundamental conviction that successful reform of teacher training programs must be comprehensive; it must be tied to a well-thought out and clearly articulated vision of the changing role of the classroom teacher. It is our expectation that the schools of education participating in the initiative will transform their institutions and realize a new vision of teacher education.

While the jury's still out on what the final design at each of the participating colleges will look like, the process of transformation has begun. I encourage you to read the stories on these pages and learn more about the important progress being made across our region.

## Berry College

Slightly fewer than 2,000 students attend Berry College, a private liberal arts college founded at the turn of the century as a high school to serve students living in the mountains surrounding Rome, Georgia. More than 20 percent of these are enrolled in the College's Charter School of Education. "We may seem small compared to large research institutions," says Dr. Jackie Anglin, dean of the Charter School of Education. "But when you consider that year after year we're placing up to 100 highly-trained and dedicated teachers into schools throughout the South, our potential to make a difference in the lives of the children, families, and communities of the region really multiplies."

This resolve to make a difference in the region led Berry College to respond to the BellSouth Foundation RFP to recreate colleges of teacher education. "Just a few years before the Foundation began the initiative," Dr. Anglin recalls, "the School of Education had earned NCATE re-accreditation. By almost all standards, we were doing our job very well. But when the RFP arrived, the faculty considered the assertions and came to the

same conclusion: although we've got a great teacher education program, it's time to dismantle it and start all over."

Once their proposal to BellSouth Foundation had been approved, all 30 faculty members agreed to commit at least three hours every other Friday for more than 18 months to develop strategies for restructuring teacher education. In addition, faculty members have been convening monthly at the "BellSouth meetings" to share their progress and to craft an institutional strategy for change.

> **"It is our expectation that the schools of education participating in the initiative will transform their institutions and realize a new vision of teacher education."**

Now in its first year of the grant, the seeds of transformation are taking root. Each faculty member has committed to teach in the local public schools one day a week. Two faculty members will use funds from an Eisenhower grant to build an outdoor classroom at an urban, downtown school. Another faculty member has established a reading clinic at a rural school in the county. Yet another has committed to teach general math every day for a semester at a local high school. Anglin explains: "The very first assertion in the BellSouth RFP was that excellent colleges of education practice what they preach. Getting into the local classrooms was our way of fulfilling this commitment."

The Charter School has made impressive strides to prepare students for the increasing diversity of Southern classrooms. A full-time ESOL coordinator funded by the grant assures that all graduates receive the English for Speakers of Other Languages endorsement. "We can no longer assume that all public school students will speak English," Dr. Anglin notes. "It would be irresponsible to send teachers into classrooms without exposure to different cultures and without ESOL competencies." Furthermore, all students must participate in a four-week, intensive exploratory program led by a faculty member in a setting culturally different from any place they have previously lived or worked. Students might choose to teach in Costa Rica, inner-city Atlanta, or the rural mountains of northwest Georgia.

Beyond its financial impact, the BellSouth Foundation's efforts to cultivate networks among participating schools, use technology to encourage the sharing of resources and knowledge, and develop a body of technical assistance consultants have been of significant value to the Charter School faculty. "The chat rooms on the BellSouth web site, the listserv capacity, and the regular network meetings are invaluable," notes Dr. Anglin. "Not only did the Foundation provide the resources and opportunities to encourage our mutual learning, they were careful to create a non-threatening, collegial spirit among the eight grantees. We were never encouraged to see each other as competitors, but as colleagues navigating uncharted waters."

## East Carolina University

With almost 1,500 students, the School of Education at East Carolina University (ECU) houses the largest teacher education program in North Carolina. Approximately 12 percent of the program's students are African American, making the university third in the nation – among historically white institutions – in the preparation of minority teachers.

ECU has made a long-standing commitment to improving teacher education and to creating links between its academicians and researchers and the faculty and administrators in local public schools. In 1988, ECU implemented the Model Clinical Teaching Program which places education majors in year-long, public-school based internships during their senior year. Today, the program serves 11 school systems and 150 schools. "The decision to introduce the clinical program reflected our faculty's growing sense that the gap between the theory taught in universities and the problem-solving skills required in actual classrooms was increasing," says Dr. Marilyn Sheerer, dean of the ECU School of Education. "We set out to create a teaching model that integrated theory and practice. The BellSouth initiative provided additional incentives and resources to plunge into this work."

With support from the Foundation, Dr. Sheerer reduced the teaching loads of senior faculty members, enabling them to spend more time in local schools. ECU faculty, public school teachers, and student interns meet weekly to conduct on-site problem-solving seminars that "focus on real problems rooted in the real work of teaching." In these meetings, the resources of the academy are joined with the experience and wisdom of classroom teachers to create a meaningful learning experience for the student interns.

In another effort to foster collaborative learning opportunities among ECU faculty and teachers in local schools, Dr. Sheerer directed a significant portion of the BellSouth grant to support "action research" projects. Faculty from the local public schools and the School of Education were eligible to receive mini-grants of up to $4,000 to conduct collaborative, school-based research on issues related to classroom management, curricular reform, and teacher preparation. One group of ECU faculty and public school teachers used mini-grant funds to study the attitudes of sixth graders in a local rural school toward cultural and racial differences. Another cohort evaluated teaching strategies designed to improve the academic performance of special needs students.

"The action research grants gave classroom teachers the opportunity to inquire systematically about their work and to take a fresh look at the practices and strategies that ECU students need to be exposed to during their internships," notes Dr. Sheerer. "At the same time, our faculty gained insights and knowledge that will become part of the teaching curriculum. This work never would have happened without BellSouth's investment. Their funds and technical support have given us the financial resources and confidence to experiment, be creative, and take some risks. In the end, the teachers we prepare and the students they teach will be the benefactors of this work."

## The University of Louisville

In 1996, the School of Education at the University of Louisville invited a task force of university and school collaborators to help develop a framework for restructuring its graduate programs serving primarily experienced teachers pursuing post-master's degree programs while teaching full-time. They worked to address a concise challenge: "Our public schools and Schools of Education must change. They must change because of demographics, the expectation of reform, and the emerging knowledge base about teaching and learning." The School of

Education had already restructured its preservice program which is considered a model for the nation. "The experienced teacher programs provide a much different challenge," notes Dr. John Fischetti, director of the Center for the Collaborative Advancement of the Teaching Profession at University of Louisville.

"Certain themes emerged during that period," explains Fischetti. "Our restructuring efforts had to focus on creating tangible results in the behaviors of teachers and the performance of students. Experienced teachers were not satisfied with taking a series of disconnected courses and writing a master's thesis that gathered dust. They wanted the opportunity to tackle real problems facing schools and school districts. They expressed interest in working together, learning from each other, and engaging in team-based problem solving. The image of the graduate student working in isolation was a mold that had to be broken."

Resources from the BellSouth Foundation made it possible for the School of Education to take the recommendations of the task force into the community and into the classrooms. Dr. Fischetti and his colleagues convened a series of "thoughtful conversations" that brought together faculty from the School of Education, teachers and administrators from local schools, and district officials to map out a strategy for improving experienced teacher preparation and student achievement. As a result of these conversations, teachers' professional development experiences will be applied toward graduate degrees. A new system of evaluating teacher performance has also been established; experienced teachers will work with School of Education faculty members and school supervisors to develop classroom-based portfolios that document their performance and effectiveness in the classroom. "The faculty and administrators of the School of Education and the local public schools are working together in unprecedented ways to support experienced teachers," notes Fischetti. "We share a common focus: to support and improve the real work of real people."

Perhaps the most impressive accomplishment during the program's first year has been the establishment of student cohorts. In July 1998, three cohorts of graduate students were formed to consider the most effective strategies for using technology as a learning and teaching tool in schools. The cohorts – comprised of 15 students – will be prepared to be technology coordinators in their schools. "This represents a complete departure from any work we've done before," Fischetti remarks. "The teachers who go through the cohort experience will be prepared to assume leadership in their classrooms, their schools, and throughout the district."

***Leslie J. Graitcer*** *is executive director of the BellSouth Foundation, an endowed trust of BellSouth Corporation devoted to improving education in the South. She serves on the program committee of the Southeastern Council of Foundations and is founding chair and board member of Grantmakers for Education.*

**The Rural Community College Initiative: Increasing Access To Education** — In 1995, MDC, Inc., a Chapel Hill-based think tank dedicated to expanding the economy, developing the workforce, and increasing prosperity in communities throughout the American South, joined with the Ford Foundation, the American Association of Community Colleges, and nine community colleges to implement the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). Managed by MDC, the ten-year Initiative works with community colleges in rural and distressed areas throughout the country to increase access to education and stimulate economic development. Currently, 24 colleges participate in RCCI.

The following report focuses on efforts by RCCI colleges to improve access to educational opportunity and includes excerpts from an interview with MDC Senior Associate Carol Lincoln, as well as from two publications prepared by MDC: *Expanding Economic and Educational Opportunity in Distressed Areas* and *Strategies for Rural Development and Increased Access to Education: A Toolkit for Rural Community Colleges*.

## The Rural Challenge

Rural America in the 1990s is a study in contrasts. While some regions and communities are thriving, many are struggling to survive the throes of persistent poverty.

The Rural Community College Initiative focuses on economically distressed communities. Many have lost their historic job base of mining, farming, timber, or low-wage manufacturing. Some are Indian reservations that have been unable to develop viable economic systems. Still other RCCI communities face a different challenge: rapid growth threatens to overwhelm traditional culture, while low-income residents fail to reap the benefits of an expanding economy.

In all these regions, education levels are low. Many young people drop out of school; others leave home after high school or college for lack of opportunities. Community development efforts struggle to combat the sense of powerlessness that comes from absentee ownership of land and resources, a one-industry economy, and high dependence on government programs and transfer payments. And many communities are divided by conflicts between racial or ethnic groups, between rich and poor, or between natives and newcomers.

The Rural Community College Initiative helps community colleges move their people and communities toward prosperity by challenging these institutions to think broadly about their potential for regional development and by fostering a climate of innovation that will spark local solutions.

## Why Community Colleges?

Rural community colleges and tribal colleges are uniquely positioned to be catalysts for increasing economic and educational

opportunity in their communities. They are "common ground" institutions, respected by public, private, and nonprofit sectors. They can be a safe, neutral place for mobilizing community engagement and building social capital.

As flexible institutions with a broad mission, community colleges have the potential to build bridges within their communities and regions. For young people, they can bridge the gap between high school and postsecondary education or work. For adults, they can provide links to basic education, occupational training, a baccalaureate degree, and good jobs. Community colleges can connect employers with qualified workers, cutting-edge technology, and improved forms of workplace organization. And they can link potential entrepreneurs with resources for successful business operation.

## Access to Educational Opportunity

Providing broad access to education is central to the community college movement, and community colleges pride themselves on extending an open door to all in their service area. Indeed, rural community colleges (as well as their urban sisters) serve a broad socio-economic cross-section of the population.

Certain populations, however, face special barriers to education and employment. They are the people for whom "college" is often an alien idea and a forbidding institution. If they are to enroll and succeed in college programs and secure good jobs, the college needs to provide not just passive access through open admissions and low tuition, but active, aggressive outreach, counseling, support, and job placement. RCCI colleges are working to increase access to education in the following ways:

- ***Building partnerships with secondary schools.*** Community colleges can play a powerful role in raising academic standards and achievement levels in middle and high schools. They can encourage more young people to prepare for and enroll in college, as well as help students make a successful transition to college and career. Proven strategies include: coordinating a high quality regional college and Tech Prep Program; developing "bridge" programs that offer career education, academic enrichment, mentoring, and dropout prevention for middle and high school students; joint faculty development and curriculum development for the college and secondary schools; and dual enrollment courses to enable high school students to earn college credit.
- ***Helping disadvantaged students achieve academic success.*** Economically and educationally disadvantaged students face barriers to academic success. To help them complete programs and advance to further education and jobs, the college needs to provide strong support such as counseling, tutoring, mentoring, financial aid, child care, and transportation. The college may need to help faculty and staff learn new strategies for working with

disadvantaged students. RCCI colleges are demonstrating several ways to help all students succeed in college:

➙ *Address family and community barriers to education.* Many potential students never enroll in college programs – or enroll and drop out – because of family or community barriers. Women may experience family resistance to their educational and career aspirations; students with family responsibilities may drop out when problems at home eclipse their studies. Some community colleges are beginning to view students in the context of family and community. Strategies for support include: on-campus child care centers; wellness centers; family literacy programs; and on-campus "one-stop centers" where students can get referrals to counseling and other human services. As important as specific strategies are faculty and staff who understand and support their students.

➙ *Help students move beyond developmental courses into college-level programs.* Many students who enter college with low academic skills never advance beyond developmental studies. Integrating developmental studies with college-level courses and providing appropriate support for at-risk students is proving a successful alternative to traditional remedial coursework. Strategies include: assigning outstanding teachers to developmental courses and encouraging communication between developmental and other faculty; integrating marginal students into regular classes augmented by tutoring and learning labs when appropriate; and teaching faculty how to use learner-centered methods that tap into students' different learning styles.

➙ *Using culturally based curriculum.* All students learn better when they feel valued, and for students from racial and ethnic minorities, this includes affirming their cultural heritage. Historically, Native Americans, Appalachians, Latinos, and other rural minority groups have seen their cultures belittled by educational institutions and disrupted by outsiders and newcomers to their regions. Tribal colleges in particular (as well as other rural community colleges) have shown how to integrate traditional culture into the curriculum in a way that makes education more meaningful and builds students' pride in themselves, their heritage, and their community.

**"As flexible institutions with a broad mission, community colleges have the potential to build bridges within their communities and regions."**

➙ *Ensure that community college students can transfer successfully to a four-year institution.* In low-income rural areas, a high proportion of students who seek a baccalaureate degree begin their education at the community college. To help students transfer successfully to a baccalaureate program, the college must ensure high academic standards in transfer work, develop articulation agreements

with four-year colleges and universities, and counsel students about their options.

- ***Offering nontraditional programs to meet the needs of nontraditional students.*** With reduced federal support for job training and welfare programs, it is more important than ever for community colleges to reach out to underserved populations which include high school dropouts, mothers on welfare, and other dislocated workers. Many of these adults are not presently candidates for traditional college curricula but need job readiness preparation, improved literacy skills, and referral to other employment-related services to earn a living. In many rural communities, the community college is the only institution that can coordinate these services.

> **"Educational innovations and community reforms are more likely to root and spread when they are reinforced by hospitable public policies."**

➙ *Job readiness.* The community college, in conjunction with other community organizations, needs special staff to reach out to unemployed adults, to counsel them and refer them to programs tailored to their needs. The college may be the best place to provide the instruction they need – including literacy and occupational skills, personal motivation and self-esteem, and job-seeking skills. Once they are employed, the college can link these adults to the continuing education and training they need to advance beyond an entry-level job.

➙ *Adult literacy.* In many communities adult literacy programs are fragmented and unrelated to the demands of the workplace. Colleges should work with the local organizations that sponsor adult basic education to insure that programs are accessible, high quality, and helpful in preparing adults for the workplace. Many rural community colleges offer literacy instruction in workplaces, tailored to meet the specific needs of workers and employers.

➙ *One-stop centers.* The hub of future employment and training programs will be one-stop centers that connect people to education, training, and employment. Community colleges are ideal institutions to house these centers since they have relationships with both job-seekers and employers, and they provide both short-term and lifelong education and training.

- ***Offering distance learning opportunities.*** In sparsely populated rural areas, distance education is an especially useful tool for educational access. The community college can be a catalyst in forming distance education networks and helping partners obtain funding for telecommunications equipment. It can offer specialized college prep courses to isolated high schools, and can use telecommunications to link more remote community centers and satellite campuses for classes and videoconferences. Through agreements with universities, rural community colleges can make baccalaureate and graduate level courses available to rural residents.

## Ongoing Challenges

While RCCI colleges and the rural residents they serve have experienced steady, positive results, a number of challenges remain. "The chronic nature of rural poverty and the difficulty of applying conventional economic development strategies in many rural areas can threaten the momentum created by the RCCI program," says MDC's Carol Lincoln. She also cites spatial challenges (such as dispersed population and inadequate transportation systems), recruitment challenges, and an unrealistic ratio of expectations to resources as hurdles.

"One of the most critical ways we can support these institutions," Lincoln adds, "is by addressing current and future public policy. Educational innovations and community reforms are more likely to root and spread when they are reinforced by hospitable public policies. We need legislators and policymakers to be more aware of the critical role community colleges can play. In turn, the people who make policy and funding decisions need to support these colleges in their efforts to promote economic development and to increase access for all learners. It's a gradual process, but one that we anticipate will greatly benefit the institutions and their communities."

For more information about RCCI, contact:
**Carol Lincoln**
Senior Associate, MDC
e-mail: linc@gate.net

For more information about MDC, contact:
**Leah D. Totten**
Communications Director, MDC
Telephone: (919) 968-4531
e-mail: ltotten@mdcinc.org

# Alabama Southern — Community College

### Developmental Studies Program

Alabama Southern Community College serves a rural community that rates high in poverty and low in educational attainment. Because many of the students enrolled at the college need remedial work before they can successfully tackle college-level courses, Alabama Southern has long had a developmental studies program as well as adult education and GED classes. But the developmental studies track stretches out the time needed to get a degree, and like many community colleges, Alabama Southern was concerned about the large number of students assigned to developmental studies who dropped out before completing a college program.

To address this challenge, the college restructured its developmental studies program. Developmental studies and all academic support services were placed under a single umbrella. The college expanded its Learning Lab to offer both mandatory and voluntary tutoring for students in academic classes. And the college adopted an individualized learner-centered approach to teaching that benefits all students.

Today, all incoming students are tested for academic skills as well as learning styles, special needs, and personality types. The college uses this information to place students in appropriate classes, to identify their needs for extra support, and to help teachers design appropriate, learner-centered strategies in the classroom.

In the 1996 academic year, 275 students were assigned to the Learning Lab. Graduation rates in Adult Education have risen, and 15 GED recipients qualified for scholarships to Alabama Southern. The learning-style assessments have spread to classes throughout the college.

# Southwestern Community College

## New Century Scholars Program

The New Century Scholars Program began in the summer of 1995 as the brainchild of Dr. Barry Russell, then president of Southwestern Community College, and Dr. Charles McConnell, then superintendent of the Jackson County Schools. Their idea was to raise money from local sponsors to guarantee two years' tuition at Southwestern Community College for selected Jackson County students who agreed to stay in school and abide by a code of good conduct, service to the community, and academic effort.

When the chancellor of Western Carolina University heard of the program, he offered to extend the guarantee of free tuition through four semesters at WCU to all New Century Scholars who complete an associate's degree at Southwestern Community College. The following year, the two other counties in Southwestern's service area, Swain and Macon, were included in the program.

New Century Scholars are selected by a school-based team on the basis of risk factors as well as signs of potential success in school. Each student selected must sign a contract promising to maintain good attendance, to complete all assignments, to strive for continuous academic improvement, to participate in 60 hours of community service, and to remain free of drugs and alcohol. Students' parents or guardians sign a contract pledging their involvement and support in their children's education.

Students in the program are matched with a mentor, either an adult in the community or older student, who helps them set goals for the future. They receive academic, career, and personal counseling from counselors at their schools, and career counseling from Southwestern Community College.

Since 1995, 315 middle school students in the three-county area have enrolled in the program. Participating students receive higher grades than their peers and have better attendance records.

Source: Strategies for Rural Development and Increased Access to Education: A Toolkit for Rural Community Colleges (MDC, Inc.)

**Carol A. Lincoln** *is senior associate at MDC, Inc., and project director of the Rural Community College Initiative. She is co-author of "Who's Looking Out for At-Risk Youth" and "America's Shame, America's Hope: Twelve Million Youth at Risk," which led to a national PBS television project to raise public awareness of the at-risk youth crisis.*

**Learning from the Past, Anticipating the Future: The Role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities** — In his thirty years as president of Xavier University of Louisiana – the nation's only predominantly black, Catholic college – Norman Francis has witnessed the positive effects that strong black institutions can and do have on the lives of youth. In addition, he has spent much of that time advocating for national education reform. Dr. Francis has served on advisory councils for four United States presidents, including Ronald Reagan's Commission on Educational Excellence. That group's 1983 report, *An Open Letter to the American People, A Nation at Risk*, urged citizens to recognize and take action against inadequate public education that short-changes millions of young Americans. While he acknowledges that some progress has been made since the report, Dr. Francis cautions: "We are still at risk. And sadly, in our rush for excellence in education, we have left equity in our wake."

In the following essay, taken from an interview and recent commencement address, Dr. Francis describes the legacy of historically black colleges and universities, the role they have played in educating at-risk youth, and the ways in which these institutions can serve as a model for advancing student achievement.

## Tradition and History

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) date back to the years preceding the Civil War. In an effort to segregate higher education, states throughout the country, but particularly in the South, established separate institutions for black students. Many started as high schools, then became normal schools for teacher preparation, and later evolved into four-year accredited institutions.

The basic mission of historically black colleges was quite clear and direct: to provide a total educational experience to those black American citizens who were excluded from mainstream institutions and, in delivering these educational services, to contribute to the development of well-rounded human beings. The earliest schools were likewise committed to the development of the larger society. This dual commitment to students and society continues to this day. As Professor Charles Willie of the Harvard Graduate School of Education says, HBCUs exist "for their value to society and because of their function" in higher education.

The student bodies during the early years were quite diverse: rural and suburban, poor and middle class, young and not so young. Some of the students who entered the doors of the first HBCUs came academically well-prepared. Many demonstrated academic potential, but had only limited formal training. These institutions have a rich tradition of taking risks on students who have potential and creating an environment that cultivates success and achievement.

Despite limited, often meager resources, HBCUs developed appropriate curricula,

nurturing environments, a dedicated teaching faculty, and a fundamental value system to support their diverse student bodies. They have amassed a proud legacy of achievement and have graduated African Americans into virtually every professional endeavor. The educational results of these institutions, given their isolation and limited resources, are unequaled in the annals of higher education.

## Accomplishments

Historically black colleges and universities represent three percent of all higher education institutions in the nation. Of the almost 3,600 institutions of higher education, only 102 are HBCUs. But our accomplishments and value to the African American community and to the nation are most significant.

HBCUs graduate 30 percent of all African Americans who receive baccalaureate degrees. Forty percent of all African Americans who go on to earn graduate or professional degrees earn baccalaureate degrees from historically black institutions. Our contributions to the economic strength of the country are impressive as well. A recent report by the Educational Testing Service, *Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, maintains that African American students who graduate from HBCUs are more likely to pursue post-graduate studies in the fields of engineering, sciences, and business – the fields that will drive the American economy in the next century – than African American students who attend traditionally white institutions.

I am particularly proud of the university with which I have been associated educationally and professionally for more than 50 years of my life. Xavier University of Louisiana, with an undergraduate enrollment of 2,600 students, has 957 biology majors, 105 computer science majors, 96 physics/pre-engineering majors, and 32 mathematics majors. Xavier ranks first in the nation in the number of African Americans receiving degrees in biology, the life sciences, physics, and the physical sciences. In addition, Xavier ranks first in the nation in placing African American students in medical and pharmacy schools. At Xavier, the faculty, staff, and students take great pride in shattering the myth that minorities cannot excel in the sciences.

## Formula for Success

The structure and culture of historically black institutions contribute in large measure to our success. The entire college community bonds to educate students, to ensure retention, and to propel students toward graduation. The entire campus operates under the simple but profound belief that everybody is somebody and is capable of learning. HBCUs expect the best of our students, where others sometimes assume the worst. Academic achievement is celebrated; cultural activities promote and honor diversity. The opportunity for spiritual reflection and participation underscores the respect due to each individual, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin.

At Xavier, we like to say we have "standards with sympathy." We set high standards for our students, but at the same time, we're sympathetic to their diverse educational backgrounds. We try to help and support them through the process. But sympathy never takes precedence over standards; the two exist side by side to ensure success.

We believe further that the building blocks of an equitable system of higher education, one that is geared toward opportunity and equitable participation and success for all students, must be based on three guiding principles identified in the Southern Education Foundation's report entitled *Redeeming the American Promise*:

- **Comprehensiveness:** The experiences that students have in higher education are a direct result of what happens to them in K-12 education. Our two systems are inextricably intertwined, and these linkages must be recognized and actively addressed in policy and program formations.
- **Student-centeredness:** Higher education must honor the centrality of the student in its mission and gear programs to assure the development of the education of the person.
- **Accountability:** Institutions must be driven by performance and be accountable for student success. Likewise, they must fulfill their fiduciary responsibility to spend funds entrusted to them in a judicious manner.

At Xavier, these three principles guide much of our work. We link with elementary and secondary schools throughout New Orleans and teach mathematics, biology, chemistry, analytical reasoning, computer skills, and reading throughout the school year. Our summer programs reach more than 1,500 students. We're working with community-based organizations to improve housing, public health, and education in low-income neighborhoods. Students at Xavier benefit from extensive peer tutoring, faculty mentors, laboratory assisted tutoring and skill development, one-on-one counseling, and cultural and leadership development. In addition, we collaborate with Tulane and other major universities to provide research opportunities for our students and staff, and to establish joint degree programs.

**"The opportunity for spiritual reflection and participation underscores the respect due to each individual, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin."**

Like the other HBCUs, we at Xavier understand that our success will be measured not only by how we work with our current student body, but also by how we engage the community beyond our walls to support the achievement and success of minority students. We have, from our founding days, recognized an important fact in human development: not every flower blossoms on the first day of spring. Some need more attention, sunshine, water, and loving care. HBCUs understand that it is our job to make the soil as rich as possible so that our young people can develop fully and reach their potential.

## Challenges

Despite our impressive and important accomplishments, historically black colleges and universities face equally significant challenges as we approach the next century. These challenges come on multiple fronts and demand both attention and response.

On the public front, there are those who not only ignore and demean the rich accomplishments of HBCUs, but question whether this justifiably proud and productive part of higher education is consistent with our new so-called desegregated society. State legislators continue to request justification for their existence and have gone so far as to suggest that these institutions be closed in an attempt to promote desegregation and equal opportunity. To continue to single out and label these institutions an anachronism in "desegregated" society on the basis of the race of our students and to promote their extinction is tantamount in my mind to perpetuating a fraud equal to that imposed on the American people in the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision which created the "separate but equal doctrine" in America. This decision dismantled the progress made in Reconstruction and has adversely affected the South and the nation to this day.

The dismantling and elimination of HBCUs would have equally deleterious effects on the African American community and on the nation at large. If we are going to thrive and prosper as a country, we must be intentional about developing the human capital and human resources within our minority communities. I dare say no other set of institutions has done more to promote such development. If these institutions did not exist today, someone would be developing a system to mirror their accomplishments.

As serious as the public attacks on black institutions may be, I am equally concerned by the continued erosion of public education in America. In all of the national challenges we face that tear at the fabric of a just society – from poverty, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, to unemployment, racism, and the destruction of family life – our continuing inability to provide a quality education to a vast number of children can be identified as the crisis that threads itself through all other challenges. The children who are most jeopardized are the poor of all races, but particularly minority Americans. They live in rural areas, the inner city, and on reservations. In a few years, they will represent the majority of this country.

**"I see today a nation of Americans of diverse backgrounds who, after moving closer together on common national goals a decade ago, are moving selfishly apart on racial, economic, and social levels."**

HBCUs have a responsibility for and a legacy of working with these children and

families to provide opportunities and a pathway for success. Since our inception, we have educated and nurtured children who have fallen victim to an educational system that shunts their development and denies their God-given talents. Perhaps more than ever, we must address this national crisis that places all members of our democratic society at risk. It is a challenge that looms large.

## Closing Thoughts

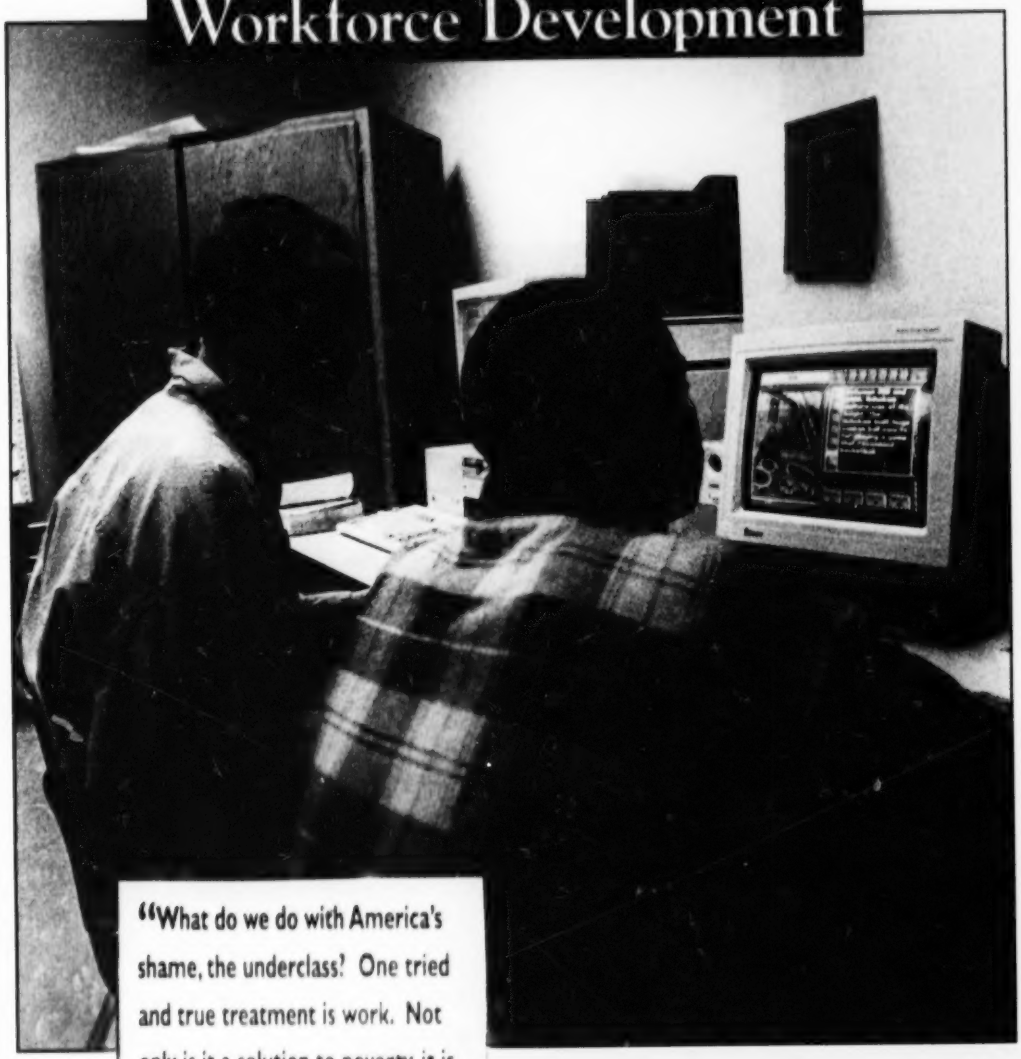
I see today a nation of Americans of diverse backgrounds who, after moving closer together on common national goals a decade ago, are moving selfishly apart on racial, economic, and social levels. We are losing our common ground, ignoring how dependent we are upon each other as people in a free society. We are becoming paranoid about differences and growing reluctant to work with each other. This unhealthy polarization suggests that if it is good for minorities, it must somehow be detrimental for the majority (and in some quarters, vice versa). New code words separate Americans. The word "equal" has been substituted to undermine the legal principle of equity; "affirmative action" means unqualified; "level playing field" ignores large gaps and inadequate opportunities to succeed. This language pervades even higher education.

With an unusually high degree of ignorance or plain bigotry we suggest in our policies that *race* should be ignored. In America, the preeminence of race remains part and parcel of everything we do. This is not a color-blind society. And, as a consequence, our solutions must address – directly – the role of race in the fabric of this society. Whether we are ready or willing to admit it, the issue of race remains the faultline.

HBCUs and all institutions of higher education can ill afford to accept passively these signs of the time. We must encourage our students to develop coalitions of understanding that will bring people together. We must make our diversity the source of our strength. We must learn that if one American is undereducated, then all of America is distressed. Higher education must develop the climate for learning and provide – through caring and quality teaching and administration – the recognition that human intelligence and human potential is not confined to one class or race.

***Dr. Norman C. Francis*** *has served as president of Xavier University of Louisiana since 1968. During his 30-year tenure, the University has more than tripled its enrollment, broadened its curriculum, and expanded its campus. He serves as chair of the Southern Education Foundation and member of the Advisory Committee to the Director of NIH.*

# Workforce Development



"What do we do with America's shame, the underclass? One tried and true treatment is work. Not only is it a solution to poverty, it is more and more often the only point where the races connect across the divide of class, neighborhood, church, and school."

— George B. Autry

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- The Greater New Orleans Jobs Initiative: Not Just Another Jobs Program
- An Interview with Dr. Robert M. Franklin
- Foundation for the Mid South: The Story of Workforce Alliance and Mississippi County

# The New Orleans Jobs Initiative: Not Just Another Jobs Program

— In 1995, the Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) was invited by the Baltimore-based Annie E. Casey Foundation to serve as the New Orleans convenor for the Casey Jobs Initiative. The Initiative, "designed to improve access to jobs for disadvantaged, young adult job seekers (aged 18 to 35)...and to mount a reform of public and private jobs-related services and systems," required invited cities to submit a Jobs Initiative application.

After a comprehensive, community-based planning process, the Metropolitan Area Committee, a regional planning group, in partnership with the Citywide Tenants Council, two church-based organizing projects – All Congregations Together (ACT) and the Jeremiah Group – and community-based stakeholders identified eight of the city's ten public housing sites and the neighborhoods surrounding these sites for job projects.

In late 1995, New Orleans was selected as one of six sites throughout the country to receive funds and technical assistance through the Casey Jobs Initiative. After completing the planning phase of the project in late 1997, the board of the New Orleans Jobs Initiative (NOJI) hired Darryl Burrows as the organization's first full-time executive director. In addition to receiving support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, NOJI is funded by the City of New Orleans, the Housing Authority of New Orleans, the Reily Foundation, the Jeremiah Group, First National Bank of Commerce, Entergy Corporation, BellSouth, and the Greater New Orleans Foundation.

The brief narrative that follows shows how one Southern city has begun to address the pressing issues of under- and unemployment in the region.

*Our Mission: NOJI has a threefold mission: (1) preparing people with low income for jobs that sustain families; (2) building a skilled labor force that business needs to grow the local economy; and (3) advocating for public policies and regulatory reform that promote the sustainable achievement of the aforementioned mission elements.*

## The Place

Visitors passing through New Orleans on Interstate 10 would have no reason to exit the highway and take notice of the house at 1240 North Claiborne Avenue. The freshly painted pink Victorian with white trim sits nestled between the former home of the Straight Business School and the Claiborne Tire and Auto Service. The faded UniRoyal sign on the corner of Esplanade and Claiborne recalls days past when the oil and gas industry buoyed the New Orleans economy.

But to the residents of the bordering neighborhood – and to more than 55,000 public housing residents in New Orleans – the house at 1240 North Claiborne represents hope. It is a place of promise and opportunity. This place is the home of the New Orleans Jobs Initiative.

"When you go around this neighborhood," notes NOJI Executive Director Darryl

Burrows, "you see a community that's experienced tremendous deterioration. But if you put your ear to the ground and listen carefully, you will hear the residents speaking in terms of restoring this place. Their memory tells them it used to be better. That's foremost in their minds. The Straight Business School next door is a reminder of where we've been and what we can accomplish. During the segregation years in New Orleans, Straight was the foremost black business college in the city. It was where African Americans came to be prepared for professional work and well-paying jobs."

## A Changing Context

Jobs. They come in a variety of shapes and forms. In days past, the port and maritime industry and oil- and gas-related businesses dominated the New Orleans economy, creating middle-class jobs and employing many of the city's African American residents. But changing patterns of trade, technological innovation, and declining oil prices sent silent shock waves through the city.

In the six-year period from 1984 to 1990, New Orleans lost approximately 20,000 jobs. Between 1980 and 1990, the total population of the city declined by more than 60,000 people. By 1990, 64,000 fewer white citizens called the city of New Orleans home than had in 1980. The population that will take New Orleans into the 21st century is largely black (more than 62 percent in 1990) and increasingly poor (more than 31 percent of the residents lives below the poverty line).

Low-wage, low-skill jobs disproportionately replaced the higher-wage work on the water and on oil rigs. These jobs – largely in the service sector – seldom pay enough to cover all the bills a household accumulates over any given month. Rarely are health and dental insurance included in the compensation package. Few workers in these positions know the luxury of pension plans and matching 401(k) contributions. These are the proverbial "dead-end" jobs: the jobs that lead nowhere except to subsidized public housing and to health care access through the emergency room doors of public hospitals.

Public housing residents in New Orleans have had their fill of these jobs. What they want and need are good jobs, the kind that sustain healthy families and strong communities. "When the folks from Casey came to visit in 1995," recalls Ben Johnson, president of the Greater New Orleans Foundation, "they made it clear from the beginning that they were only interested in supporting cities committed to improving access to *good* jobs – jobs that paid at least $7 an hour, included benefits, and had a career path. It was our charge to put the under- and unemployed on the radar screen in New Orleans and to build bridges between the people and institutions that could make the Initiative happen.

"We knew how much work was involved. We knew we had to dispel the lingering myths that certain people don't want to work or can't hold down a job. We knew we had to find a way to talk about institutional

racism that honored people's experiences without polarizing the conversation. And we knew we had to find a way to talk about what we were doing so that the community could begin to see how *New Orleans* – not just a select group of individuals in New Orleans – stood to benefit from a well-trained workforce. But before we could accept these challenges, we had to assess whether we as a foundation and a community were up to the challenge – if we had the capacity to do the work with integrity."

All institutions and communities can tick off dozens of reasons why – despite the best intentions – efforts to effect change invariably fall short of desired outcomes. New Orleans in the mid-1990s was no exception. A history of failed jobs programs, racial tension, long-standing myths about the work habits of poor people, and shifts in the economy had joined forces to create an environment that was, if not hostile, certainly not conducive to significant workforce system reform.

**"It was our charge to put the under- and unemployed on the radar screen in New Orleans and to build bridges between the people and institutions that could make the Initiative happen."**

"Before the Jobs Initiative," notes Alden J. McDonald, Jr., chair of the NOJI Board of Directors and President and CEO of Liberty Bank and Trust, the largest African American bank in Louisiana, "there had never been any in-depth focus on the unemployed population in New Orleans. We had sponsored several jobs programs in the past, but none of them got off the ground. We as a city had never talked candidly about the relationship between racism and unemployment. We had never talked about the responsibilities that both employers and potential employees had to fulfill to make an initiative of this sort work. This was a different kind of project, and people were understandably hesitant about investing their time and energy."

## Tools For Success

The Jobs Initiative *was* different. It would require unprecedented levels of coordination among service providers, employers, and educators in New Orleans. Its focus would go beyond the short-term goals of job placement and job retention. This Initiative would challenge the community to develop a long-term strategy for creating a strong workforce by building the capacity of local institutions and addressing barriers in public policy.

The barriers to change were real, but they were also surmountable. Four elements – a shared vision, a commitment to community ownership, attention to building nontraditional relationships, and data collection and analysis – proved especially potent strategies to overcome the legacy of job programs gone sour and pave the way for reform.

***Vision:*** "We knew from the outset," describes Linetta Gilbert, vice president for programs at the Greater New Orleans Foundation, "that the success of the Initiative would depend in large measure on

our ability to articulate an inclusive vision that both businesses and community residents could embrace. People had to understand that businesses were not going to be pressured to hire unskilled, untrained workers. At the same time, community folks needed to know that we were committed to moving them up the career ladder. We had to be clear about expectations on both sides. In the end, we agreed that we wanted to create a mechanism and establish processes that would increase the skills and assets of workers as well as sustain economic growth in New Orleans by developing a highly-skilled and motivated workforce."

***Commitment to Community Ownership:*** "When the meeting was held to select the neighborhood organization, it became apparent that Citywide fit every criterion that Casey was looking for in New Orleans," notes Donna Johnigan, president of the Citywide Tenants Council. "We represent a large portion of poor people and their families, and we know about the barriers to getting and keeping jobs – the lack of childcare, transportation problems, what it means to have a criminal record. We deal with these issues every day. If this project is going to work, we have to be involved.

**"...we wanted to create a mechanism and establish processes that would increase the skills and assets of workers as well as sustain economic growth in New Orleans by developing a highly-skilled and motivated workforce."**

"We're not asking for people to come in and do the work for us. In fact, we've been working every step of the way. We helped write the proposal to Casey, and our people did the door-to-door interviewing in the housing projects during the community mapping process. Citywide, ACT, and the Jeremiah Group all sit on the governing board and have veto power over the board's decisions. By working with Jeremiah and ACT, we make sure that people living outside of public housing will benefit from NOJI and that more people throughout the city have a stake in our success."

***Attention to Building Nontraditional Relationships:*** "The attention to building relationships was critical," reflects Dr. Ronald French, a NOJI board member who joined the Initiative in its formative stages. "From the very beginning, the leaders of the community foundation were careful to cast the net as wide as possible. They brought key business people together with leaders from the community college and the local universities, with the grassroots organizations who had credibility among the target population, and with policymakers who could help eliminate barriers to good jobs.

"The other important decision we made as a group was to invest significant time early in the process so that people could listen to each other. We had so many disparate groups working together who didn't know one another and who didn't necessarily trust everyone at the table. The tenant organizations were skeptical because they had seen so many initiatives come into their communities with promises of jobs

and careers that never amounted to anything. Likewise, the businesses in our community had been asked to support a number of jobs programs that fell short of expectations. Understandably, these traces of skepticism and doubt had to be addressed. With the help of facilitators, we made time and opportunities for people to vent their frustrations, recognize mutual interests, and *then* to establish goals and delegate responsibilities."

***Data Collection and Analysis:*** "The research piece done during the planning process was as good as that kind of work can be," observes McDonald. "Not only did the steering committee take a hard look at the New Orleans economy to determine what industries could sustain good jobs, they contracted with a local firm to interview residents of public housing sites to learn more about the needs, capacities, and perceptions of the people the Initiative was designed to help. The committee hired another local group to prepare inventories of local training programs and human service providers. When it came to designing the program and developing the Strategic Investment Plan, we had information we needed to make informed decisions."

## The Years Ahead

With the planning work behind them, outcomes and results are now the order of the day. During the first four years of the project, NOJI intends to place hundreds of disadvantaged young adults from its target population into good jobs in the construction, manufacturing, health care, and office systems industries. Leaders of the Initiative plan to develop a "soft skills training" program that will prepare potential employees for the world of work and improve the customer service practices of agencies that support low-income residents seeking employment. "We view the Casey grant as a capital investment," Burrows observes. "We're going to build the program's infrastructure during the first few years, focus on quality over quantity, and demonstrate that we can move people into the middle class. Specifically, NOJI plans to move more than 100 under- or unemployed certified nursing aides to LPN or RN status."

In addition to these goals, the NOJI board and staff hope the Jobs Initiative will act as a catalyst to build capacity at the local community college. "We're very clear that one of the major system reforms we want to focus on is at Delgado Community College," notes Burrows. "We need to bring world class resources to the community college – nothing less than the best. We need to stimulate them to build a flexible, employer-driven training portfolio that provides local businesses with the skilled workers that they need to grow. Delgado's the linchpin in all this, and they're very excited about the possibilities."

The Citywide Tenants Council, the Jeremiah Group, and All Congregations Together continue to figure prominently in the future success of NOJI. Representatives from these community-based organizations will be responsible for recruiting residents of their

communities to participate in the Initiative. In addition, they will help assess the social service needs of the prospective workers, and provide much-needed social support – the lack of which often prevents inner-city residents from moving into good jobs. "We're in this for the long haul," notes Johnigan. "We're determined to prove that there are really good people out there who want to work and who have the capacity to work."

## No Quick Fixes

NOJI is poised for success. It has already demonstrated that community-based organizations, local service agencies, employers, and the community college can join forces to strengthen the workforce in New Orleans. During the planning phase, NOJI ran a successful prototype targeted at the construction industry. The Citywide Tenants Council's Uhuru Corporation and the St. Thomas/Irish Channel Consortium recruited African American men from the housing projects to participate in the training program. The Orleans Private Industry Council offered work readiness and life skills training. The Associated Builders and Contractors, a local network of construction employers, and Delgado Community College provided occupational skills training and academic upgrading. Participants who completed the program were placed into 18-month construction jobs with the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

"It can work," asserts Barbara Major, who served as acting executive director of the Initiative during the planning phase. "The construction prototype is proof. But if it's going to work to its full potential, we must never lose sight of the fact that this is not just another jobs program. It's larger than that. It's about how people grow into jobs, and how industry changes the way it engages people. It's about changing the behavior of both the workforce and the community. We need to hold the entire community accountable so that people who want to learn, work, and get ahead have access to resources and opportunities. When that happens, we can all pat ourselves on the back for a job well done."

For more information about the New Orleans Jobs Initiative, contact:

Darryl Maurice Burrows
Executive Director
1240 North Claiborne Avenue
New Orleans, Louisiana 70116
(504) 529-2600

***Darryl M. Burrows** is executive director of the New Orleans Jobs Initiative. He has served as vice president of organizational development at Neighborhood Progress, Incorporated (Cleveland, OH) and Bethel New Life, one of Chicago's most successful community development corporations. He is co-author of "Building Community: Social Science in Action."*

**An Interview with Dr. Robert M. Franklin** — Dr. Robert M. Franklin, Jr., is President of the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) — one of the nation's leading centers of historically African American religious training and graduate education. He has served on the divinity school faculties at University of Chicago and Harvard University, as well as Colgate-Rochester Divinity School and Candler School of Theology (Emory University). Prior to assuming the presidency of ITC, Dr. Franklin was a program officer at the Ford Foundation, where he had primary responsibility for grantmaking to African American churches engaged in secular social service delivery.

Dr. Franklin is the author of two books, *Liberating Visions: Human Fulfillment and Social Justice in African American Thought* and *Another Day's Journey: Black Churches Confront the American Crisis*. In the latter, he urges an activist Christian commitment by African American churches to resolve America's mounting social problems.

Over the summer, Dr. Franklin took time from a hectic schedule to consider the role of religious institutions in promoting workforce development. Excerpts from that interview appear below.

*Increasingly, government and philanthropic institutions are looking to religious institutions to address issues of workforce development. Welfare reform comes immediately to mind as an example. What are the theological and moral bases for such activity?*

A central social teaching of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament is the link between the development of the moral person and the production of a just and good community. Authentic spirituality is conceived as a personal, developmental journey as well as a social, community-building enterprise. Consequently, the moral person is urged in sacred scripture to be exceedingly concerned about the plight of the marginalized and disenfranchised in society: the poor, the unemployed, the disabled, the homeless. Being rooted in this tradition, religious institutions in contemporary society have a moral imperative not only to develop and cultivate the spiritual lives of individuals, but also to help fashion an economy that serves all people in the community. We are responsible for tending God's household and ensuring that resources are equitably distributed.

Another central teaching in the tradition is the belief that persons have been created in the image of God. As such, we are called to be co-creators with God and are morally obligated to contribute to the common good. When our society pushes any of its citizens to the margins of the economy by denying them meaningful work and employment, we deprive them of the opportunity to fulfill their duty as co-creators.

In arguing that religious institutions have a role in promoting job creation and workforce development, I offer one caution. There is work in our society that does not ennoble people – work that fails to honor the inherent value and dignity of human persons. In their effort to move women from welfare

to work, for example, I am concerned that there has been a lack of creative imagination on the part of government and policymakers. There's a cynicism about what these women can learn and contribute. Putting a person behind a counter at a fast food restaurant without providing any social support, training, or incentives to pursue future education does nothing to prepare that person for the rapidly changing economy. It's a short-sighted solution that will only contribute to the deepening sense of hopelessness in many of our country's poor families and neighborhoods.

*What roles can congregations, conventions, and judicatories play in promoting job creation and workforce development?*

The contributions that religious institutions can make to enhance economic opportunity for under- and unemployed Americans are diverse and far-reaching. The faith community should work to ensure that poor people have the resources and skills needed to participate in the economy and earn a decent wage. I am afraid that churches have not been sufficiently proactive in holding communities and policymakers accountable for the education they provide poor people. It's a public disgrace that there are children in America who do not have access to computers and who are not learning how to use technology. These children are falling farther and farther behind every day. Without basic competencies in technology, math, and communications, these children will be consigned to underemployment and joblessness throughout their adult lives. Religious institutions must not sit passively by and ignore this crisis. It's an anti-biblical, inauthentic expression of spirituality to abandon the life of the public.

**"I am afraid that churches have not been sufficiently proactive in holding communities and policymakers accountable for the education they provide poor people."**

In addition to giving voice to the struggles of the disenfranchised, congregations can play a critical role in supporting people as they enter the workforce. I met recently with representatives from the Department of Labor and learned that job retention among women moving from welfare to work is as much a problem as, if not more than, recruitment and placement. Many of these women lack adequate support systems and sufficient self-confidence to hold down full-time jobs. Religious institutions can work to improve retention by offering counseling and support to people as they enter the labor force – many for the first time. Another way congregations can address the issue of retention is by organizing and establishing social service programs that respond to the needs of workers and families. For example, churches have an established reputation for providing high quality, affordable child care. With appropriate technical assistance and financial resources, churches could expand

these services to meet the growing needs of low- and moderate-income families.

Churches can also support job creation and workforce development by engaging in comprehensive community development. Churches can acquire property and develop affordable housing. They can invest financial resources to establish community-based credit unions and revolving loan funds to support local entrepreneurs. Churches can operate businesses and hire community residents as employees. We must not lose sight of the fact that religious institutions control financial assets that – when wisely invested in developing the capacity of people – can lead to job creation and asset accumulation.

*Beyond financial resources, what assets can religious institutions contribute to workforce development efforts?*

In terms of concrete assets, churches own buildings which can be used to house day care programs and computer and literacy classes for children and families. Congregations can partner with local community colleges to offer training programs on site for potential workers, and they can ask employers from their local community to speak about job opportunities. The church represents a safe and welcome space for people who might be reluctant to attend a college class or who would be hesitant to make an appointment to speak with a human resource representative at a local business.

Churches have networks of volunteers who can support people as they enter the labor force. We know, for example, that the lack of transportation is a significant barrier for low-income people as they enter the labor market. Many of the under- and unemployed who live in inner cities do not have access to automobiles and cannot compete for jobs located outside of cities. Church volunteers can help by sponsoring carpools so that people can get to work on time. Another way that volunteers can support people in their efforts to maintain employment is to watch children on days when a child is too sick to go to school or day care or when a scheduled babysitter cancels at the last moment – situations that often force parents to miss work. By offering a support network for members of the local community, churches can help people get and keep jobs.

As far as intangible assets, churches possess credibility and moral capital. They are credible institutions because they have an unparalleled record of service in their communities. Churches will be in communities after a government grant runs out or when other organizations pack up and leave. If communities are serious about developing the capacity of people to prosper in the workforce, churches are a logical starting place for these efforts.

In terms of moral capital, churches offer people struggling to make it through each day a sense of hope and encouragement. Churches understand the value of patience and endurance, and they can nurture these traits in people who suffer setbacks on a daily basis. We all know that holding down a job can be a frustrating experience. It's a very human response to want to pull back and quit when things get tough. But churches

can support and sustain people through difficult and trying times. They can help people stay in jobs long enough to develop new skills, compete for promotions, and receive pay raises.

*How can foundations support religious institutions in their efforts to strengthen local economies?*

Certainly foundations control financial resources that congregations need to provide day care, after-school programs, and transportation. I have seen numerous examples where faith communities have taken it upon themselves to respond to a pressing social need and have become strapped for financial resources when word gets out about the program's quality and effectiveness. Foundation support can help churches sustain and expand their social service delivery and reach the growing number of people who need assistance. Philanthropic investments can also support religious institutions' efforts to promote comprehensive community development through land acquisition, housing construction, and business development.

Foundations can use their resources to develop the capacity of religious leaders to operate programs. Many of the people who administer programs are extremely well-intentioned and talented but have limited experience working with foundations and local governments, managing complex budgets, and evaluating programs. The Institute of Church Administration and Management on the campus of ITC addresses this issue by offering seminars and workshops on financial management, strategic planning, proposal writing and grant management, and leadership development. We are committed to developing the capacity of people who lead religious institutions as one strategy for strengthening local neighborhoods and communities.

Finally, foundations can support workforce development by creating opportunities for people to come together, share ideas, and learn from each other. During my travels throughout the South, I have been impressed by the quantity and quality of programs being sponsored by religious institutions. Unfortunately, most churches work in isolation from one another and lack the benefit of technical assistance and support. Philanthropy can encourage learning and sharing among these institutions by supporting the dissemination of information, convening church leaders, and facilitating enhanced communications and networking.

***Dr. Robert M. Franklin*** *is president of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia. He is a board member of the Congress of National Black Churches and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, an advisory board member of the Children's Defense Fund's Black Church and Community Crusade, and a member of the Board of Governors for the Indiana University Center for Philanthropy.*

# Foundation for the Mid South: The Story of Workforce Alliance and Mississippi County

— Established in 1991, the Foundation for the Mid South (FMS) was created to develop opportunities for progressive change in the Mid South states of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. FMS operates in three principal program areas: economic development, education, and families and children.

With financial support from the Pew Charitable Trusts and technical assistance from MDC, Inc., FMS began the Workforce Alliance (WFA) initiative in 1993. Operating in ten communities throughout the Delta, WFA seeks to raise the skill level of the Delta's labor pool to create a globally competitive workforce. The Walton Family Foundation has also provided significant funding for WFA.

The story that follows documents the impact of Workforce Alliance on one Delta county – Mississippi County, Arkansas.

## The Beginning

"It all began in 1993," recalls Sam Scruggs, executive director of the Mississippi County Economic Opportunity Commission (MCEOC). "The Foundation for the Mid South ran an article in the local newspaper about a new program it was launching throughout the Delta. It sounded like something Mississippi County should be involved in, so Robin [Myers] and I made the drive to West Memphis. That car ride was the first of dozens we would make together over the next five years."

When Robin and Sam arrived in West Memphis, they learned about Workforce Alliance, an FMS initiative to enhance the quality of the workforce in the Delta region by providing resources and incentives for all sectors of local communities – schools, businesses, educational institutions, religious institutions, and nonprofit organizations – to rethink, redirect, and reform their educational and training systems. Workforce Alliance was designed to accomplish three primary goals:

- **To upgrade the current workforce** through workforce literacy and skills training tailored to the needs of firms and sectors that can expand the region's economic base;
- **To integrate unemployed and marginally employed adults** into the labor market through skills and pre-employment training; and
- **To prepare the workforce of the future** by linking middle schools, secondary schools, postsecondary technical training, and employers to facilitate school-to-work transition and postsecondary training for young adults.

From the first meeting, the Foundation for the Mid South made it clear that the only communities that would be eligible to participate in the initiative were those that had potential for economic growth, an educational infrastructure that included public secondary and postsecondary institutions, and a commitment to working across the divisions of race, class, gender, and

geography. They were also looking for communities that embodied an *ethos* of achievement and high expectations.

FMS Vice President for Programs Dr. Beverly Divers-White explains: "Workforce Alliance had at its core a commitment to strengthen the workforce in the Delta. But we were equally committed to promoting comprehensive community change. It was our contention that the region could not develop an economy that served all its people without adopting a new social compact.

"The compact we proposed emphasized high academic achievement and rejected any social tolerance of low performance and standards. We were intentional about identifying communities that had demonstrated commitment to three core values: they operated under the assumption that *all* children and adults can learn; they could provide evidence of public education and training institutions, families, and the local community accepting shared responsibility for the education of its residents; and they were committed to the principle that educational and training institutions should be shaped to meet the needs of the learner, rather than learners shaped to fit the wants of the institution. These were the non-negotiable values that informed – and continue to inform – the selection of Workforce Alliance communities."

## The Planning Process

On the drive back to Blytheville, Robin and Sam reached the same conclusion: not only was Workforce Alliance something that Mississippi County should be involved in, but Mississippi County was a region that could live up to the Foundation's high expectations. "We knew we had the right mix of assets to be competitive," adds Myers, the Vice President for Instruction at Mississippi County Community College.

"We had people with a strong work ethic who wanted to be employed and an infrastructure that could support economic growth. The leaders of our schools shared the FMS philosophy, and our Chamber and local businesses were committed to hiring more workers from the local community. It felt like the right time to respond to the Foundation and pursue their support." Mississippi County submitted a planning grant application to FMS and was selected as one of four regions to receive a $25,000 planning grant.

Over the next nine months, a core group of educators, business and civic leaders, and nonprofit executives from across Mississippi County met with teams from the Arkansas mid-Delta, the Mississippi Delta, and the Louisiana parishes of Ouachita and Morehouse. They met in Blytheville (AR), Greenville (MS), Monroe (LA), and Vicksburg (LA); Holiday Inns and Ramada Inns became second homes.

During their travels throughout the Delta, the Workforce Alliance counties participated in a comprehensive planning process designed by MDC, Inc., a Chapel Hill-based research organization, and the Foundation for the Mid South. "It was rigorous training," Dr. White recalls. "The communities had to learn about workforce development systems, collect and analyze data about employment patterns in their regions, and establish a shared vision and comprehensive action plan for

developing a competitive and productive workforce. The process forced them to take a hard look at who was well-served by the economy and where the gaps were within the current education and training systems. The teams could not lay out a vision for the future without having a clear grasp on their current situation and structure."

**"It was our contention that the region could not develop an economy that served all its people without adopting a new social compact."**

As part of their data collection and vision development, planning committee members solicited input from community members. "The community meetings taught all of us a lesson about community change," Scruggs says. "We learned that you just can't hold a meeting at 10 a.m. at the public library or the Chamber of Commerce and expect people to show up. Most of the people we wanted to talk with and learn from worked during the day and could not take time off from their jobs. Others didn't have transportation to get to the meetings. Still others were reluctant to come and talk because they had no reason to believe that things were going to change as a result of the conversations. We had to rethink our approach to the meetings to ensure that people who have been historically excluded from conversations in the county could attend and feel free to talk once they got there."

In addition to challenging steering committee members to think more critically about the local economy, the training helped build the capacity of the four teams to lead a process of community change. Members of the planning committee learned about decision making within teams, methods for conducting effective meetings, the value of stakeholder and force field analyses, processes by which effective collaboration is nurtured and sustained, and strategies for implementing and monitoring change within structures and systems.

"The training process was long and grueling," reflects Mike Wilson, an FMS board member and a member of the Mississippi County steering committee. "But it was absolutely essential. The content of the planning process opened our eyes to the importance of developing new workforce systems if we wanted to be economically viable in the 21st century. The structure of the planning process gave residents of the northern and southern parts of the county a chance to work together on real problems and to assess where we were strong as a team and where we needed to improve."

## Implementation

With the nine-month planning phase under their belt, Sam, Robin, Mike, and the other committee members put pen to paper and prepared Mississippi County's proposal to FMS requesting $400,000 over four years to support Workforce Alliance. The application required the planning team to integrate skills and knowledge gained during the strategic planning process. "The implementation proposal was the culmination of nine months of learning and working together," notes Wilson. "It required that we be clear about our vision for the county's future and the

long-term objectives of our work. We had to think systematically about the obstacles and barriers we would likely encounter and develop strategies for leveraging local resources and assets to realize our goals.

"But perhaps most importantly, the proposal forced us to identify measurable outcomes and indicators of success. We had to be clear about what we wanted to accomplish, how we would know if we were successful, and what standards we would use to hold ourselves accountable to each other, the community, and the Foundation. The emphasis on evaluation and assessment at the beginning of the work has kept us focused on the big picture and given us a framework to think about how we invest our limited human and financial resources."

## Results

The investment in planning paid off handsomely for the team from Mississippi County. In late Fall 1994, the Foundation for the Mid South selected Mississippi County Workforce Alliance (MCWA), Ouachita and Morehouse Parish Workforce Alliance, and Mississippi Delta Workforce Alliance to receive four-year implementation grants. "We celebrated when we heard the news, breathed a sigh of relief, and got ready to work," says Myers.

Their work over the last four years has yielded significant results. The fruits of the their labor include:

- **Unprecedented levels of collaboration among institutions participating in Workforce Alliance.** Mississippi County Community College (MCCC) and the Mississippi County Economic Opportunity Commission (MCEOC) have worked together to establish a Kids College at MCCC. The program, designed to improve access to college for parents of small children, is housed at MCCC and operated by the Economic Opportunity Center. MCEOC is in the process of building a new center down the street from the community college to provide additional child care services for MCCC students. "All that time in the car paid off," says Scruggs. "Robin and I spent hours upon hours talking about how the county could help eliminate barriers to education and employment for people who want to work. This was a concrete way our agencies could address the issue."

> **"The emphasis on evaluation and assessment at the beginning of the work has kept us focused on the big picture."**

- **Improved coordination of existing resources.** MCCC in Blytheville and Cotton Boll Technical Institute in Osceola have joined forces to enhance services provided to current and potential employers. When a local steel mill expressed interest in developing a welding program for nontraditional workers, for example, Cotton Boll developed the curriculum for training and MCCC met with employers and developed a survey instrument to assess barriers to employment. "It's one example of how we can share our resources to serve employers more efficiently," says Myers.

- **Increased access to jobs for the under- and unemployed.** "Workforce Alliance has been a catalyst for groups throughout the county to reach out to people without jobs," notes June Malone-Hill, executive director of Mississippi County Workforce Alliance. Local churches helped identify county residents who live in public housing and receive welfare for the Each One – Reach One program. Participants in the program receive job training and support services in an effort to move them from welfare to work.

  As part of the Job Seek and Keep Program, human resource directors and industry representatives have gone into the community to recruit potential employees. "The employers are committed to breaking down the barriers that lead to unemployment," says Malone-Hill. "They've gone to churches and community centers and accepted job applications on site." MCWA reports that more than 30 county residents have secured employment through the program. The HR directors also partnered with MCCC to introduce the Workforce Orientation and Retraining Keys program (W.O.R.K.) targeting marginalized workers. Participants who successfully complete the seven-week intensive training program are given priority for jobs in local industries.

- **Community renewal and development.** With funds from a Workforce Alliance mini-grant, the town of Birdsong, Arkansas, initiated a construction apprenticeship program for ten town residents. The women and men who participated in the program acquired skills in plastering, basic carpentry, landscaping, sheetrock and roofing installation, and landscaping. Over the past several years, participants have helped to restore dilapidated housing, maintain local public parks and city buildings, and construct a bank in a neighboring town.

  The skills learned, knowledge gained, and relationships established during the Workforce Alliance planning process also played a significant role in the County's designation as an Enterprise Community. "When the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community initiative was announced, we had all the pieces in place to make a successful application," says Scruggs. "We knew the needs of the county, as well as our resources. We had a vision for the future and committed stakeholders. Our infrastructure was in place. The nine months of planning served us well...again."

## Lessons

The past five years have been a time of rich learning and development for the Foundation and the participating Workforce Alliance counties. As she sits in a community center in Blytheville, Arkansas, Dr. White reflects on the lessons learned since the program's inception:

"We sensed from the beginning that **involvement of grassroots leadership** was critical if Workforce Alliance was going to reach its potential. People who work in the mills and those who are unemployed have different perspectives and issues than the

leaders who traditionally design programs. What we did not expect was the time and resources it would take to recruit grassroots leaders and to build the capacity of diverse leaders to work together as equal partners.

"Our **focus on systems reform** seems to be on target. We're seeing real progress in Mississippi County and the other Workforce Alliance regions in terms of linking secondary and postsecondary educational institutions with employers to create a stronger workforce. We've learned, however, that **inadequate transportation systems** and the **lack of affordable child care** continue to impede rural workforce development. Many workers in rural counties are employed in mills and factories that operate second and third shifts. If they don't own a car and can't catch a ride with someone, they might have to pay up to $20 a day for a cab. Likewise, the cost of child care makes it almost impossible for workers to meet their monthly bills, let alone save money.

"Finally, we've learned how important **financial capital** is to promote workforce and economic development. We designed Workforce Alliance as one component of the Delta Partnership that included the establishment of the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta (ECD). ECD has played a pivotal role in supporting the establishment and expansion of small- and medium-sized businesses in the Delta. Their investments support job creation in a region where well-paying work is in short supply. Mississippi County is a good example. ECD has invested over $900,000 in that area. Our challenge is to strengthen the partnership and attract more resources for both efforts."

## A Closing Reflection

"When Sam and I made the first trip to West Memphis, we never could have foreseen the impact Workforce Alliance would have in Mississippi County," reflects Robin Myers. "We talk about our county in a different way now. We name our assets and speak with optimism about our future. We've had some heated conversations about what it means to be black in Mississippi County and about what it means to be low-income. As a result, the businesses and schools are changing how we operate to serve the diverse needs of our county's people. The next ten years will make or break Workforce Alliance and Mississippi County. We're poised for success, but we have to stay focused to make it happen."

***Dr. Beverly Divers-White** is the vice president for programs at the Foundation for the Mid South. She is the former superintendent of the Lee County School District in Marianna, Arkansas. In that position, Dr. White focused on strengthening the infrastructure of a small, rural, economically impoverished lower Mississippi Delta school system.*

# A Final Thought

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate,
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.
We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,
talented and fabulous?

Actually, who are you NOT to be?
You are a child of God.
Your playing small doesn't serve the world.
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that
other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are born to make manifest the glory that is within us.
It is not in some of us, it is in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give
others permission to do the same.
And as we are liberated from our own fear, our presence
automatically liberates others.

— *Nelson Mandela*

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# Credits

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Raymond Holman, Jr.
Philadelphia, PA

Michael Myers
Jacksonville, FL

Robert J. Willis
Jacksonville, FL

225 WATER STREET • SUITE 1200
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202-5176
1-800-252-3452 • (904)353-0890
FACSIMILE (904)353-3870